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Mahatma's ashes cast on Ganges

M R Narayan Swamy in Allahabad

THE last remaining ashes of Mahatma Gandhi were cast last week into the holy Hindu river Ganges in the northern city of Allahabad exactly 49 years after the assassination of the leader of India's independence movement.

Amid chanting of Hindu scriptures by pundits, Tushar Gandhi, the 35-year-old great-grandson of the Mahatma, scattered the ashes from a copper urn that had been stored in a bank vault almost 50 years ago and then surprisingly forgotten.

The brief ceremony, watched in silence by about 2,000 people, marked the end of a controversy that simmered for two years. In 1994, the State Bank of India in Cuttack stumbled on a long-forgotten box in its vault, which turned out to contain a portion of Gandhi's ashes that had been deposited for safe-keeping by a politician in 1948, the year Gandhi — the man who did more than anyone else to topple the British Raj — was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic.

Tushar Gandhi wanted the ashes to be scattered in the Arabian Sea off Gujarat, Gandhi's birthplace. But India's Supreme Court asked him to carry out the rites in Allahabad, a Hindu pilgrimage centre where the Ganges and Yamuna rivers merge.



Tushar Gandhi scatters the last remaining ashes of his great-grandfather into the Ganges PHOTOGRAPH: SHERWIN CRASTO

Sharif sweeps to landslide victory

Suzanne Goldenberg in Lahore and agencies

NAWAZ SHARIF'S Pakistan Muslim League swept to a landslide victory in Monday's general elections, invading even Benazir Bhutto's native Sind province, previously her virtual fiefdom.

Early results showed Ms Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) coming close to collapse outside her home territory, with the Muslim League capturing nearly all the seats in Punjab, the country's political heartland, and, together with its allies, a majority of seats in the North-West Frontier province.

On Tuesday, with 177 results declared for the 217-seat National Assembly, the PPP had won only 15 seats, mostly in Sind province, against an outright majority of 124 seats for Sharif's PML.

Before the dismissal of Ms Bhutto as prime minister in November, the PPP held 86 seats to the PML's 72.

Mr Sharif's election landslide sets the stage for a strong Pakistani government, but possible protests by Ms Bhutto could cloud prospects for stability, analysts said on Tuesday. Ms Bhutto has said she would not accept the outcome of the elections if she lost, accusing the caretaker government of acting to ensure the vote went in Mr Sharif's favour.

Commonwealth election observers, led by the former Australian prime minister, Sir Malcolm Fraser, detected no major abuses in the polls.

A political analyst, Shirin Mazari, said a PPP boycott would make little difference given the PPP's dismal electoral showing. "Even if the PPP wants to act as a spoiler, it can't actually do so. If a party of such size boycotts parliament, it hardly questions the legitimacy of parliament," she said.

Mr Sharif's majority may insulate his government from possible protests by a wounded Ms Bhutto, but he will have to tread carefully in his relations with President Farooq Leghari and Pakistan's powerful military establishment.

Pakistan has been under military rule for 24 of its 50 years of independence. The past four governments, including two led by Ms Bhutto and one by Mr Sharif, have been sacked by presidents using controversial powers to dissolve the National Assembly. President Leghari called the last elections after firing Ms Bhutto on November 5 on disputed charges of corruption and misrule.

Before the election, Mr Sharif's opponents accused him of striking a secret deal with the president under which the PML would be allowed to retain power as long as it accepted the "advice" of a new security council, which gives the military a formal say in government. Both men deny any such accord.



Triumphant: Nawaz Sharif

Mr Sharif said on Tuesday he would implement reforms to rescue an economy he said was ruined by Ms Bhutto's government. "Benazir Bhutto has totally destroyed our economy, so we'll have to bring in very bold reforms," he said in his home city of Lahore.

"Since we have an overwhelming majority, we are preparing a fresh agenda" for reforms, he said, adding that he would be ready to talk about them in detail later this week.

Although the initial results surpassed even Mr Sharif's expectations, perhaps the most telling result is the turnout figure — 25.96 per cent — a sign of widespread disenchantment with Pakistan's two main politicians and the prospect of voting for the fourth time in nine years.

A devastating defeat looms for former cricket hero Imran Khan, whose Tehreek-e-Insaaf party was faced with the possibility of not winning a single seat.

UK relents on Hong Kong minorities

Vivek Chaudhary and Rebecca Smithers

MICHAEL Howard, the Home Secretary, was expected to announce this week that 8,000 ethnic minority citizens of Hong Kong will be given full British passports after increased criticism that they would have been left stateless when the colony is handed back to China.

Most are from the Indian subcontinent and will be eligible for British national overseas status, with the right to live in Britain.

Mr Howard was expected to make the announcement in response to a parliamentary question on Tuesday following sustained lobbying by Tory MPs and representatives of Hong Kong's non-Chinese community who have been in London recently for talks with politicians.

According to government sources, members of the community who already have nationality of other countries, such as India or Pakistan, will not be entitled to British passports.

Chris Patten, Hong Kong's governor, has been championing the cause of the colony's ethnic minority community, claiming that leaving them stateless would damage Britain's credibility in negotiations with China over civil liberties.

Mr Howard has been resisting moves to grant Hong Kong's non-Chinese community full British passports. But political sources said that although Mr Howard was against the move, Mr Patten had won him and John Major over during his visit to London in December.

According to the sources, the granting of British passports will serve mainly to reassure the community should an uncertain political atmosphere arise when Hong Kong is handed over.

The change in the Government's position follows a sustained campaign by backbench Tories, led by Sir Patrick Cormack, the MP for Staffordshire South.

During a high-profile visit to the colony last spring, the Prime Minister said he sympathised with the plight of the non-Chinese ethnic community, but could only promise a guarantee of resettlement in Britain if they came under pressure to leave.

The Indian community in Hong Kong dates its origins back to the 19th century: about 2,000 Indian troops were present in the colony when it was taken over by the British. Many of them are successful businessmen and craftsmen and are not expected to take advantage of the right to resettle in Britain.

Hong Kong's Chinese community will be entitled to full Chinese citizenship when the colony is handed over. The Chinese government, however, has said it will not grant citizenship to non-ethnic Chinese residents of the colony.

Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong adds: Hong Kong has lost 30 per cent of its British population in just nine months, abruptly reversing what had been an end-of-empire gold rush.

British business leaders attribute the decline to the ebb of a "floating population" made up of backpackers, labourers and short-term contract staff working on a new airport. Policemen and civil servants are also leaving.

Over the nine months to the end of last year the number of Britons dropped from an all-time peak of 36,900 to 25,500.

Austria	AS30	Malta	60c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.75
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 450	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Peru's poor hostage to Western fortune

IT IS unfortunate that the international limelight falls on Latin America only when kidnappings of foreigners, military coups or volcanic eruptions stir the sedated minds of North Americans and Europeans (No future for rebels trapped in the past, January 5).

Contrary to what we are told, Peru, like the rest of Latin America, is not a democracy.

True, there are spurious parodies of elections in which wealthy presidents are replaced by rich presidents. These *opera buffas*, as the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda called them, are legitimised and certified by one or more international democratic/endowment foundations (usually from the United States), each eager to extend their own influence and thus help to plunder whatever resources are present in the targeted country.

Any legitimate opposition is quickly silenced by covert or open state terrorism: incarceration, disappearances, torture and illegal executions. As a consequence, a large majority of the poor are disenfranchised from the power structure.

In fact, Latin Americans have become hostages of the neo-conservative economic project, designed by the G7 nations and imposed on Latin America by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other financial institutions. As a result, 500,000 children die every year of hunger and curable diseases. Furthermore, in a tragic and perverse ransom-style payment system, Latin Americans have paid their captors, the industrialised countries, $630 billion since 1986 for servicing interests on a debt acquired and squandered by the Latin American oligarchies.

These "second-class hostages", unlike the ones in the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima, receive no medical attention whatsoever and live in abject poverty.

No one should be surprised if one day the lid comes off the pressure cooker that is South American society. In 1961 when President Kennedy launched the Alliance for Progress he said: "Those who oppose peaceful changes will have to endure the responsibility of violent changes." The choice is ours.

Carlos Flores,
Victoria, BC, Canada

Mixed blessings of political union

THOSE who seek to surrender British sovereignty to the European Union often cite the United States as a salutary example. For some of us Yanks, though, our union is a mixed blessing. The common currency is handy, to be sure, but there are drawbacks. There is free trade among the states, which makes it easy for businesses to relocate, and northern states with decent welfare, education, and labour policies are constantly threatened by southern states luring employers with promises of cheap labour, low taxes and no trade unions. Relatively sophisticated northeasterners have their television censored by southern preachers. Our insanely punitive criminal laws are the work of southern Democrats and reactionary Republicans.

Because of that unholy alliance, most of our taxes for the last 50 years have been spent on the invasion of Vietnam, the destruction of several Latin American, Middle Eastern and African countries, and fighting communism. Abraham Lincoln thought it worth a war to keep the union together, but in recent decades, membership has been mostly an expensive embarrassment. And if Lincoln had let the Confederacy go, our current president, vice-president, Senate majority leader, and Speaker of the House would not be eligible to hold office in Washington.

Michigan, where I live, has a good balance of heavy and hi-tech industry, services and agriculture and many good public universities. Our economic direction, however, comes from federal loonies like Alan Greenspan and Paul Volcker, who seek to control inflation by kiting unemployment and curtailing business investment. Those rushing to the EU should consider the value of democracy when economic policy is not controlled by the electorate. If Euroscepticism has become pejorative, at least substitute Eurocaution.

Art Hilgart,
Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA

Royal yacht in choppy waters

MICHAEL PORTILLO has made much of the need to maintain the pomp and dignity of the monarchy by not involving private finance in the replacement for Britannia (Royal family dragged into yacht row, February 2). A few years ago I was invited to the Queen's birthday celebration at the British ambassador's residence in Warsaw. The garden was full of marquees promoting British products, and the highlight of the celebration was Beating The Retreat by the band of the Royal Highland Fusiliers — sponsored by Rank Xerox.

I was told the Foreign Office insisted that all such events should be financed through commercial sponsorship.

Lord Carter,
House of Lords, Westminster, London

YEARS AGO the UK had a hospital ship, HMHS Maine. Her replacement was already on the stocks when it was decided to build the royal yacht. It was said at the time that not enough funds were available for both. The Britannia was built and the hospital-ship replacement scrapped.

The excuse given for this was that in time of war the Britannia would convert to a hospital ship. Since she was built we have experienced many crises and conflicts, Suez and the Falklands being two of the most serious. I do not recall the Britannia playing any part in either of them.

Now a replacement is to be built. What will the Navy lose this time?

Neil Walker,
Colchester, Essex

THE current American presidency appears to be turning fund-raising into a fine art. Perhaps Britain could learn from America.

Before it is too late, may I suggest that the royal family be privatised? If royals were responsible for generating their own income, they would no longer be a burden on the taxpayer, and much of the wind would be removed from republican sails. Indeed, this might be the only way of preserving the monarchy as an institution.

The opportunities are endless. Appropriate charges could be made for a royal handshake, a public speech, tickets to the Trooping of the Colour, B&B at the Palace . . . Investors at home and abroad would surely flock to buy shares in such a unique enterprise.

Andrew Chesterman,
Helsinki, Finland

Passion in the Canadian forests

HAVING lived in Canada from 1968-84, I was interested in Tom Bryson's article about the controversy over logging in Northern Ontario's old-growth pine forests (Wail of the lonesome pine, January 19). But why did Mr Bryson give the impression that this controversy is a surprising development on the Canadian scene? While Canada is still a "peaceful, well-ordered, socially-democratic" society, passionate and at times fiercely confrontational disputes over the treatment of its forests (and other matters of national concern) have been going on for years. Indeed, Canada has for some time been prepared to take issue with its more powerful neighbour over environmental protection, although that is not to say its own record is above criticism.

Perhaps Mr Bryson isn't interested in knowing about Canada in depth, or in presenting articles about it in a broader context, because he considers it, and the Scandinavian countries to which he somewhat inappropriately compares it, "boring"?

Patricia M. Brown,
Crafers, South Australia, Australia

TOM BRYSON'S excellent article showed that his heart was in the right place, even if his political analysis was a little confused. Mike Harris's extreme rightwing Conservative government has been trying to out-Thatcher Thatcher. Its budgetary knife not only threatens the pines referred to in Bryson's article, but also our social security net and medical care in the province. Hopefully, however, any damage done by them will be correctable after the next provincial election. We just hope that it won't be too late for the pines.

Evan Patrick,
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Health warning for junk food?

ANNE KARPF is quite right when she points out the dangers of the commercial exploitation of children by junk-food companies (Vegetables matter, February 2). But she understates the seriousness of the problem.

Junk food, promoted as it is, is not simply a health issue. The creation of a demand for specific brands of food undermines parental authority and budgetary control, weakens and breaks up families by destroying the cohesive habit of communal eating, and acts against cultural diversity by subverting the world's traditional cuisines.

The solution is simple. We accept constraints on tobacco and alcohol advertising; let us also restrict the advertising of unhealthy food products, or indeed all advertising calculated to exploit young children — which naturally goes unquestioned by them.

Laurence Mann,
Twickenham, Middlesex

Briefly

ISRAELI "settlers" in Hebron should do — for the sake of peace — what all other "settlers" in other parts of the world (Australia, America, etc) do: that is, adopt the nationality of their new country.

How would the US administration deal with a situation where, for instance, Mexico grabbed a piece of US territory, quickly established "settlers" there at the expense of American citizens and when demands were made to recover lost territory, used the safety of the "settlers" as bargaining points?

If Israel thinks that she is entitled to her God-given land, should not the Australian Aborigines and the American Red Indians not have the same right to reclaim back their God-given land and chuck out the mainly white population?

Henk Hout,
Sydney, Australia

WHY DO market forces have to be hard on the poor and disadvantaged? Chris Barrie's article (Lights switched off on mean street, January 5), may well be the future for free-enterprise countries but does it have to be? Here in Zambia the state-owned Electricity Supply Corporation charges higher unit prices to customers who use more electricity. This is not only fair in a Third World situation but would carry great benefits if adopted in the West.

Higher charges for higher consumption encourages energy saving, which cuts down on pollution, an ideal way for the UK to cut down on power station emissions.

Neil McCartney,
Kitwe, Zambia

I WOULD like to know what Matthew Engel meant by "From a distance the sounds merged into a general ululation, like an African funeral". Is he referring to Malawi, Gambia or Madagascar? Or perhaps he's referring to funerals in Uganda, Namibia or Lesotho? It's about time condescending generalisations of the African continent were curtailed.

Wina Sangala,
Lilongwe, Malawi

MAY the Lord preserve us from politicians whose preoccupation is to "go down in history" (Mitterrand's plan to 'bow out in style', Le Monde, January 19).

If anything has bedevilled mankind over the centuries it must surely be this preposterous and lethal vainglory among the great, but not so good. Besides, whose company exactly did Mitterrand hope to keep? Attila the Hun? Genghis Khan? Stalin? Hitler?

Sylvia Ismall,
Wilmslow, Cheshire

James Dale, not John M Miller, wrote the first letter in the "Briefly" column last week. Apologies.



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Belgrade police inflame protest

Julian Borger in Belgrade

CENTRAL Belgrade resembled an armed encampment for the second night in succession on Monday as President Slobodan Milosevic threw hundreds of riot police into his 11-week conflict with anti-government protesters.

In response, opposition leaders called for a public campaign of passive resistance, including the closure of schools and universities, the non-payment of tax and bills, and a national strike.

They warned that the Serbian leader may invoke emergency powers as busloads of riot policemen, some with automatic rifles, were brought in from provincial towns to prevent an estimated 80,000 demonstrators from marching in the main shopping district — the latest in nearly three months of protests against government election rigging.

More than 100 people, including a senior opposition leader, were injured by the police action, which appears to have been centrally co-ordinated.

Last Sunday, in a sign that Mr Milosevic is determined to hang on to his authority, riot police in Belgrade used baton charges and — for the first time — water cannon to disperse demonstrators.

Western European capitals issued stern rebukes for the use of force. During a visit to Sweden, Malcolm Rifkind, the British Foreign Secretary, said: "The Serbian authorities must allow opposition supporters to meet and demonstrate freely. The only way forward is for President Milosevic to recognise without further delay the opposition victories in the November elections."

The Serb leader's hardline stance is also causing concern to his former allies. Borisav Jovic, Yugoslavia's former president and a senior Serbian Socialist, warned Mr Milosevic last week that the ruling party would turn against him unless he accepted election defeats and reduced the political influence of his wife.

In an interview with the Guardian, Mr Jovic, the president's closest war-time associate, launched a bitter attack on the leadership of Mr Milosevic and his wife, Mirjana Markovic, and predicted the break-up of the Serbian Socialist Party (SPS) and a political realignment.

Mr Jovic, who was the chairman of Yugoslavia's collective presidency for a year from May 1990, said the Serbian leadership had violated the constitution by annulling opposition victories in local elections last November — the move that triggered the street protests.

He urged the president to recognise the results or seek a political compromise with the opposition Zajedno coalition, but said: "I don't believe he is psychologically capable of even realising his mistake and correcting it."

Mr Jovic is the most senior figure to break ranks. His criticism is a further sign that the longer the crisis continues, the more the president's authority will suffer. The Orthodox Church has turned against Mr Milosevic, and the army refuses to act against the demonstrators.

Meanwhile damning new evidence is emerging of Mr Milosevic's pursuit of a "dirty war" in Croatia and Bosnia that significantly strengthens the case for his indictment by the war crimes tribunal in The Hague.

The president's former allies and employees are beginning to speak out about how the covert war was fought. The damaging claims made by former allies point to the existence of a parallel chain of command that allowed Mr Milosevic to bypass the Yugoslav army — which he distrusted — and exert direct control over Serb paramilitary groups and their campaign of ethnic cleansing.

A former paramilitary commander, Branislav Vakic, said his men were armed and trained by agents of Mr Milosevic's secret police who now hold top posts in the regime. He said he will go to The Hague to prove he was under the same chain of command as the police and army.

● Radovan Karadzic, the wanted Bosnian Serb leader, told a Greek newspaper he was innocent of war crimes in Bosnia and said nobody would dare arrest him and bring him to trial. "I have 2,000 bodyguards who follow me everywhere. This is why they can't arrest me and send me to the court. They know that in only a few seconds there will be 500 dead and they won't be my men."

Mr Karadzic, twice indicted by a United Nations war crimes tribunal, is believed to be based in Pale, the self-proclaimed Bosnian Serb capital.



Refugees board a truck in Salang, 95km north of Kabul, as part of a forced Taliban evacuation PHOTOGRAPH: ZAHEERUDDIN ABDULLAH

Taliban makes gains in north

Jonathan Steele

PANIC stock-piling of food and a sudden collapse of the local currency are shaking northern Afghanistan as fears grow that the ultra-fundamentalist Taliban militia are on the brink of occupying the remaining areas outside their control, diplomats and aid agency officials said.

"Commanders from the forces of Abdul Rashid Dostam are thought to be buying dollars desperately, at least to get their families out, if not themselves," said a diplomat who was in Kabul recently.

General Dostam is the Uzbek warlord whose forces control Mazar and the northern plains as well as both sides of the Salang pass, which carries the main road across the Hindu Kush, the country's natural dividing line.

The other main anti-Taliban leader, Ahmed Shah Massoud, was reported by the Afghan Islamic Press, based in Pakistan, to have pulled his headquarters back to the northern side of the Hindu Kush at Andarab.

If the Taliban were to cross the mountains, Commander Massoud's retreat would give him a better chance of defending the north-western regions where his people, ethnic Tajiks, live.

In September the Taliban, after capturing the capital Kabul, pushed about 80km north but were driven back. In the past two weeks, however, a sweeping advance up the Ghorband valley towards Shibar has taken them further north than ever before.

In another sign of desperation, Gen Dostam's forces last week blew up bridges on the southern side of the Salang to prevent the Taliban storming up the pass.

The Taliban have taken brutal steps to prevent a repeat of last year's failure to advance north of Kabul; they have emptied all the Tajik towns and villages and forced civilians to trek to Kabul. So far some 90,000 people have had to leave their homes.

Juppé in pact to halt National Front

Alex Duval Smith in Paris

FRANCE'S mainstream right wing on Monday entered into a risky pact with the Socialists in an attempt to stop the National Front gaining control of a fourth southern town hall.

After the extremist National Front won a 10-point lead last Sunday over the Socialists in the first round of municipal elections in Vitrolles, near Marseille, the prime minister, Alain Juppé, called on the candidate for his own rightwing faction to stand down and asked voters to "face up to their responsibilities".

The appeal prompted the rightwing candidate, Roger Guichard, who came third with 16.3 per cent of the vote, to withdraw from the second round, due this Sunday.

The move, engineered by party headquarters in Paris, means the second round will be a run-off between the National Front candidate — who won 46.6 per cent of the vote — and the Socialist candidate, Jean-Jacques Anglade, with 36.9 per cent.

With his appeal, made on French radio, Mr Juppé was in effect calling for his own supporters to vote for the Socialist. He told France-Inter: "Voters who care about the values of the Republic should face up to their responsibilities. The rightwing candidate must withdraw from the second round and common sense must prevail."

But the municipal elections in Vitrolles are only being held because the Socialist candidate was found guilty of abusing municipal funds after his election to the town hall in June 1995. So embarrassed was the Socialist Party, which has controlled the town for more than 20 years, that it refused to support Mr Anglade's campaign in this month's rerun.

Because of Mr Anglade's record, the extremist party is expected to make Vitrolles its fourth high-profile seat in southern France. In the June 1995 municipal elections, the National Front won the large naval city of Toulon, as well as the city of Orange and a Marseille dormitory town, Marignane. It also won smaller seats in the north of France, but the party refers to its southern fiefdoms as "laboratories for National Front government".

In Vitrolles, the National Front's candidate is Catherine Mégret — running instead of the party's deputy leader, her husband Bruno Mégret. Mr Mégret was disqualified because he overspent his campaign budget in the June 1995 poll, in which he came second with 42 per cent.

Campaigning has been aggressive on all sides. The National Front has played up its anti-corruption rhetoric, frequently using its slogan "La Ripoux-blique" — the rotten republic. It points to its southern fiefdoms as models of municipal thrift.

But Andrée Baduel, a schoolteacher who a year and a half ago started a telephone hotline to protect National Front opponents in Toulon, said: "The party claims to be saving money and freezing municipal taxes. In fact, their savings have been minimal and we have seen many of the National Front's enemies facing personal threats."

Much of Vitrolles's 39,000 population is lower middle-class, having moved up in the world from Marseille's rough and racist northern district.

The Week

SOUTH AFRICA'S president, Nelson Mandela, named his bitter rival Mangosuthu Buthelezi to take control of the country while he attended the World Economic Forum in Switzerland.
Le Monde, page 13

PRESIDENT Clinton suffered a setback when Congress postponed approval of Alexis Herman, the labour secretary-elect, and Anthony Lake, nominated to head the CIA.

THE Italian government has traced five crates of gold and valuables apparently taken from Jewish victims of the Nazis.

CHINA rebuked the United States for issuing annual reports critical of Beijing's human rights record, saying they interfered in China's internal affairs.
Washington Post, page 15

THE global Red Cross organisation, IFRC, said that food rations across North Korea had dropped to a level four times lower than was normally considered essential to maintain a healthy population.

BRAZIL'S lower house voted to approve a constitutional amendment allowing the president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, to seek an unprecedented second term in office.

SILVIO BERLUSCONI'S brother, Paulo, and the former leader of his party Forza Italia, Cesare Previti, were acquitted of plotting to end the career of Italy's anti-corruption prosecutor, Antonio Di Pietro.

THE case against Timothy McVeigh, alleged to have masterminded the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, suffered a setback when prosecutors admitted that a key witness had been confused about the identity of a second suspect.

THE BELGIAN government was in turmoil as a wave of demonstrations threatened its strategy of cutting expenditure to qualify for monetary union, and the Socialist Party in the governing coalition was hit with new accusations of corruption.

THE institutions of the European Union were told to cease being a "white ghetto" and recruit more officials from ethnic minority communities, during a debate on the eve of the EU's Year Against Racism.

THE Socialist prime minister-designate, Nikolai Dobrev, surprised Bulgarians by postponing formation of his controversial new cabinet. Strikes, blockades and protests for immediate fresh elections continued for the 30th straight day on Monday by citizens who blame the government for economic chaos and want to see them swept from power.

Rift shakes up Saddam dynasty

Ian Black in London and Martin Walker in Washington

SADDAM HUSSEIN'S household in Baghdad is in disarray, with his wife Sajida depressed and out of favour following the wedding of their eldest son Uday only weeks after he was injured in a daring assassination attempt that shook the regime to its core.

According to some Arab sources Uday, probably paralysed, has married the 16-year-old daughter of one of his father's most brutal henchmen, responsible for gas attacks on Kurdish civilians — while his mother has been put under house arrest.

Intelligence analysts and Middle East experts were scratching their heads last week over the latest reports, with the White House declaring that "complicated internal struggles for power" were going on in the Iraqi capital.

Iraqi opposition leaders could not confirm the revelation by a senior Pentagon official — "from a good source" — that Sajida was under house arrest, but said she was angry and devastated by her husband's inability to secure medical treatment abroad for her badly injured son.

France, which has closer links with Iraq than any other Western country, has refused to allow him to enter the country for treatment, though French doctors have examined him in Baghdad.

Uday, aged 32, and his father's heir apparent, was seriously wounded on December 12 in a grenade and machine-gun attack as he drove through Baghdad. Reports have suggested the motive was either a business or family feud.

"Uday has been hit very, very hard and has one or two bullets left in his spine and is semi-paralysed," the Pentagon official said. "He may lose his leg from gangrene."

Reports that Uday, still in Baghdad's Ibn Sina hospital, had married the daughter of Ali Hassan al-Majid were designed to show he was in good shape, exile sources speculated.

Opposition sources said the most credible claim for the attack had been made by a small underground group called Al-Nahda (Renaissance) and that a link between one of its leaders and Sajida's brother, Louai Kheirallah Tulfah, was another reason for her rift with her husband.

President Bill Clinton was briefed on the situation in Iraq by General Binford Peay, the commander of US forces in the Gulf. Diplomats in Washington said: "It would be premature to speak of the endgame for Saddam Hussein, but something is very definitely up."

But with signs that Washington might be exaggerating President Saddam's domestic troubles for propaganda purposes, indications from Baghdad are that the most serious problem facing the president is the regime's inability to catch the perpetrators of the attack on Uday.

Rivalries between three different security organisations are taking their toll, with the lion's share of a dwindling budget now going to the élite Amn al-Khas (special security).

"Saddam's regime is more scared of people operating from within the country," said Ahmad Challabi of the London-based Iraqi National Congress opposition umbrella organisation. "The problem is not a quarrel in the family but the inability of the security services to handle internal opposition."

Last week a leading Iraqi opposition figure said President Saddam's security forces had arrested about 600 people since the attack on Uday, including more than 20 senior military officials.

AP adds: Six middle-ranking Iraqi officers have been executed and dozens arrested for plotting against the regime, the Iran-based Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq said on Monday, while the dissident Voice of Iraq radio station, also in Iran, reported that five officers had been executed and more than 3,000 detained in connection with the assassination attempt on Uday.

The reports spoke of those held including relatives of the president and people from his home town, Takrit.

Family difficulties are compounded by Sajida's grieving daughters, Raghad and Rana, whose husbands — Lt-Gen Hussein Kamel al-Majid and his brother Saddam — were killed by family members after they returned to Iraq last February from Jordan, where they had defected. Hussein Kamel al-Majid had been in charge of Iraq's secret weapons programme, while Saddam al-Majid was deputy head of the Iraqi leader's palace guard.

The Saddam family has been torn by violence, especially involving Uday, who reportedly murdered his father's half-brother in 1995, and bludgeoned to death a favourite servant in 1988. Reports at the time said Uday was angry with the servant for arranging romantic liaisons for President Saddam and he wanted to defend the honour of his mother.

During his briefing, Mr Clinton was told that a new wave of division-scale military exercises by Iraq had followed a purge of senior ranks of the Iraqi officer corps after the attack on Uday, and that newly promoted commanders were learning the ropes.



Patrizia Reggiani, ex-wife of the murdered businessman Maurizio Gucci, at police HQ in Milan. Italian police brought forward her arrest because her life was in danger from the people she allegedly employed to kill him, prosecutors said on Monday PHOTO: SERGIO PONTORIERO

Guerrilla mastermind wins Chechen poll

David Hearst in Grozny

CHECHENIA'S new president, who received congratulations over the weekend from Russian President Boris Yeltsin, will be sworn into office next week.

Aslan Maskhadov, a guerrilla commander considered a moderate by Russian leaders, won an overwhelming victory in elections last month. He has pledged to pursue full independence for the small Muslim republic, though Moscow says it will not tolerate Chechenia's secession. The two sides could hold negotiations soon, but neither appears willing to offer the compromises necessary to lead to a breakthrough.

Moderates in Russia breathed a sigh of relief after it became clear that Mr Maskhadov, who had negotiated the end of Chechenia's 21-month war against Russian forces, had won the elections. He scored a clear triumph over his main rival, the mass hostage-taker, Shamil Basayev.

Mr Maskhadov's margin of victory meant there was no second round run-off, which many feared could have led to violence. Pronouncing himself president as votes were still being counted, Mr Maskhadov said that his first task was to "calm his people down". But he insisted that his country's independence was already a fact that Russia would have to recognise formally.

Mr Maskhadov went on to say: "There is only one thing to be done now. This independence should be recognised by all the states in the world, including Russia. But we are only going to pursue this using political methods."

The first step towards international recognition of the election was provided by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, whose 72 observers said they had found no serious discrepancies in polling.

Mr Yeltsin, after a meeting with his prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, said that he was satisfied with the results. Mr Maskhadov's victory now leaves the way clear for a continuation of negotiations on Chechenia's relationship with Moscow. Formidable problems remain — not least the question of reparations for the damage that the Russian army inflicted on the country.

Mr Maskhadov said: "When the Russians understand that they have used all methods and that there is only one option left, we will have to sit down at the negotiating table and solve all the problems. We are ready for that tomorrow."

A military officer who led the Chechen guerrilla resistance, outnumbered and outgunned by vastly superior Russian forces, Mr Maskhadov has gained a reputation as both a tough fighter and shrewd negotiator, capable of compromise with his foes.

He used his short political career as prime minister of a coalition government — formed as the Russians were pulling out — to court traditionally pro-Moscow and anti-separatist Chechen villages in the north.

The few ethnic Russians left in the republic voted for Mr Maskhadov. At his first press conference, he promised to guarantee their safety and that of Cossack communities who had demanded arms to protect themselves.

In a country devastated by war, Mr Maskhadov represents the best chance of unifying the fiercely independent rival Chechen bands. Last week he held out an olive branch to his defeated opponent, Mr Basayev, calling him a "comrade in arms".

Mr Basayev, who became notorious when in 1995, as a field commander, he took 1,000 hostages at a hospital in southern Russia, had accused one of Mr Maskhadov's running-mates of corruption. The president-elect dismissed the mud-slinging as campaign "jitters". "If he wants to he can come to me and he can be my friend as he was before — nobody here will prevent that."

Everything now depends on Mr Maskhadov's ability to tame the hardline forces which have gathered around the Basayev campaign.

Threat to new SA abortion clinics

Ruaridh Nicoll in Johannesburg

ANTI-ABORTION activists warned on Monday of a "potential for violence" as hospitals and health clinics in South Africa began performing abortions, which became legal for the first time last weekend.

"By forcing people to become accessories to murder — by paying for abortions through their taxes — the government has upped the ante and left very few democratic avenues for people of goodwill to follow," said Dr Claude Newbury, president of Pro-Life South Africa.

The African National Congress pushed through its termination of pregnancy bill late last year after imposing a three-line whip to stave off opposition among its parliamentarians, many of whom were troubled by the law, which is described as the world's most liberal.

It allows abortion on demand up to 12 weeks into the pregnancy, and up to 20 weeks with a doctor's consent. Minors do not require parental consent.

Doctors and healthcare specialists at the clinics admit that the ANC has diverged from — some might even say leapt ahead of — public opinion on this issue.

"The country is deeply religious and at the community level quite conservative," said Helen Rees, a maternity care consultant. We are sending nurses to workshops so that they can separate their own beliefs from the needs of their patients."

Ms Rees is based at Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto, which is the biggest in the world. She expects that about 200 abortions a week will be performed in the township, South Africa's largest, at the hospital and the Marie Stopes clinic. It is predicted that between 208 and 520 foetuses will be aborted for every 1,000 live births.

Polls have long shown that both blacks and whites are overwhelmingly opposed to abortion. Dr Newbury claims to have a list of 500 doctors who will refuse to carry out the operation or give women advice on where to go.

"We knew that the law would be very liberal," said Paul Cornelissen, programme director for Marie Stopes South Africa. "The ANC felt very strongly that there was one law for the affluent and another for the poor — that had to go."

Previously, abortions could only be carried out if the woman was a victim of rape or incest or was physically or mentally at risk.

● The ANC demanded last week that the investigation into the murder of the popular South African Communist Party leader Chris Hani be reopened after a newspaper claimed his death was part of a more extensive rightwing plot than originally thought.

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SAS linked to Pretoria rogue force

David Beresford in Johannesburg

THE SAS, Britain's special air services, has been linked to violence by a "third force" that threatened to undermine South Africa's transition to majority rule, in a report considered so explosive it was suppressed by Nelson Mandela.

The so-called Steyn Report — the findings of an inquiry ordered by the former president, F W de Klerk, into revolutionary activities of elements of the South African security forces in the final years of white rule — was handed to Mr Mandela in anticipation of his succession to the presidency.

When the African National Congress won power in 1994, President Mandela refused to release the report, because he considered it could jeopardise the country's stability. Recently, however, he gave a copy to Archbishop Desmond Tutu's Truth and Reconciliation Commission to help its inquiry into illegal activities by the security forces during apartheid.

A leaked copy of a summary drawn up by commission officials shows the country was dangerously close to losing control of elements of the military and police in the run-up to the majority-rule elections.

It confirms the involvement of commando units in random violence, the use of poison — supplied by the Seventh Medical Division — by hit squads, and the supply of arms and training to the Zulu-dominated Inkatha movement.

The truth commission document says evidence was given to General Pierre Steyn, the head of the investigation, that destabilisation of the government and neighbouring countries was planned "to enable the military to step in credibly to create order".

Preparations for this allegedly involved stockpiling arms in countries which included Kenya, Zambia, Mauritius and Portugal, to create "springboards" for possible military action. It said there was "a suggestion that there was close contact with the British SAS".

The SAS has been previously linked to "dirty tricks" operations in South Africa. A group of SAS officers working for a private security firm in Britain were hired by wealthy conservationists in the late 1980s to come to South Africa to fight elephant and rhinoceros poachers. They became involved with local intelligence agencies and reportedly took part in paramilitary training.

Kas Enterprises, the British security firm involved, was owned by Sir David Stirling — the founder of the SAS — and taken over after his death by Sir James Goldsmith. The security firm's SAS mission to South Africa was headed by Ian Crooke, who led the SAS charge into the Iranian embassy in London at the bloody climax of the 1980 Kensington siege.

David Fairhall adds: Formal military contacts between Britain and South Africa were not restored until 1993. All official exchanges of military personnel were covered by an embargo that had been in force since 1975, the Ministry of Defence confirmed last week.

SAS sources said they would not be surprised at unofficial involvement by former members of the regiment as mercenaries. In particular, veterans of the regiment's old C Squadron, recruited in the former Rhodesia, tended to drift into South Africa, where they often became involved with the special forces.

Singapore to bankrupt dissident

Nick Cumming-Bruce in Bangkok

SINGAPORE'S leaders have stepped up their legal campaign against Tang Liang Hong, one of a tiny band of opposition politicians, with a court injunction freezing his assets up to the value of $7.7 million. Their campaign has revived questions about whether Singapore's leaders use the courts to stifle debate.

Leaders of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) attacked Mr Tang during campaigning for Singapore's elections on January 2, calling the little-known lawyer a Chinese chauvinist who threatened the delicate harmony between the island's Chinese, Malay and Indian communities.

When he replied by calling PAP leaders liars and threatening to sue for libel, legal battle was joined.

Last week's injunction follows a barrage of defamation suits brought against Mr Tang, aged 61, by the prime minister, Goh Chok Tong, the senior minister, Lee Kuan Yew, two deputy prime ministers and seven other PAP members. Ministers attack Mr Tang's credibility on the grounds that he has yet to issue any writs against them.

The "Mareva injunction" issued by the court effectively prevents Mr Tang making any financial transactions without obtaining its consent. Lawyers say the court evidently agreed that PAP leaders had a good case when proposing the sum, which represents damages and legal costs Mr Tang faces if he loses the cases against him.

Singapore's Inland Revenue Authority has seized documents from Mr Tang's home and office as part of an investigation into his tax affairs.

Mr Tang said last week he was "selling everything" to meet the costs of his defence. He called the legal actions an abuse of court process and accused PAP leaders of trying to "bury" him politically and financially. The deputy prime minister, Lee Hsien Loong, said that lawyers were examining the comment as possible grounds for another defamation suit.

The legal onslaught on Mr Tang provides what many see as a lesson in the risks run by anyone who dares to challenge the PAP. It has also brought renewed attention to the role of the courts.

Uneasy truce hangs over Capitol Hill



The US this week

Martin Walker

PRESIDENT Clinton quoted the old weasel words of Richard Nixon to admit that "mistakes were made", and to regret the "inappropriate" use of the White House and of federal officials in campaign fund-raising. He then committed himself to enacting a bipartisan bill to reform the system.

"The problem is the sheer volume of money, the time it takes to raise it, and the way it all raises too many questions. We must all share responsibility for the excesses," he said. "I take mine."

The bulk of the first press conference of Clinton's second term hinged on the issue of campaign finances and corruption, quite overwhelming the president's attempt to spell out his ambitious education reform plans and some important statements on foreign policy.

But the issue of campaign finance, and the prospect that these scandals might overshadow his second term, as Whitewater darkened the first, dominated the public relaunch of the Clinton presidency. It began with Clinton's admission that it had been wrong to hold White house coffee mornings devised to raise party funds, to which federal banking regulators were invited along with the private bankers who were being targeted for donations.

There was one escape route for Clinton, and he took it, arguing with spirit and with justice that the Republican pot was just as black as his own kettle. Indeed, the Republican senator in charge of the congressional inquiry into the fund-raising scandals of Clinton and the Democrats has been driven to promise a parallel probe into his own party, after new revelations of cash-for-access deals to Republican House and Senate leaders.

With exquisite symmetry, the Republicans were charging the big corporations $250,000 for special services, which included their own dedicated "support personnel" at party HQ, exactly the same sum paid to the Democrats by fat cats enjoying a day, or a night, at the White House. No fewer than 75 corporate leaders signed up for the deal, and some — led by the embattled tobacco companies and by the cable TV and telecommunications groups that feared new legislation — paid far more. Phillip Morris was the biggest of all, giving more than $2.5 million to the Republicans.

Each new day brings more revelations of an ever more breathtaking nature about the way in which both parties last year shook down corporate America for unprecedented sums of money, which saw the Republicans raise $141 million and the Democrats $122 million in unregulated "soft money".

A report in the latest New Yorker describes the "day at the White House" on June 22 last year from the vantage point of some of the donors who raised $250,000 to enjoy their summer afternoon at the White House. They were welcomed to roam the house and grounds, use the putting green and tennis courts before what was billed as the old-time Arkansas-style barbecue in Bill 'n' Hillary's yard.

The names of these privileged donors were culled from a project known as WhoDB (White House Office Data Base), in which the names of 355,000 Democratic donors were matched with their birthdate (for cards), interests and whether or not they were also members of the Hillary Clinton Official Fan Club, whether they were available to make up crowds when the Clintons arrived at an airport and so on.

The Republican cash-generating systems were equally brazen, even without the special allure of the White House. The "season ticket holders" who paid $250,000 to the Republican party were offered private meetings with Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and Senate leader Trent Lott, a special skybox serving champagne and caviare at the Republican convention in San Diego, breakfast with candidate Bob Dole and other favours. The real prize, however, was "support personnel in Washington DC to help with any party-related request", which included use of an office and phone at Republican party HQ, and the services of party staffers to arrange meetings with top politicians.

Senator Fred Thompson, the new chairman of the government affairs committee, confirmed that he had agreed with the senior Democrat on the committee, Senator John Glenn of Ohio, that the special hearings into the campaign finance scandal would include the Republican party.

"I am trying to strike a tone that this will be handled with a firm hand but fairly," Senator Thompson said, adding that his probe would be "even-handed" and the Democrats would be given staff and a budget to run their parallel inquiries into the Republicans.

The mutual embarrassment of both political parties raises the prospect of a compromise, in which each side agrees to draw a line under the latest scandals and pass the bipartisan McCain-Feingold bill to reform the campaign finance laws. While Clinton and Gingrich are urging just such a bipartisan truce, zealots on both sides are out for blood.

The shameless nature of the process, which is arousing growing complaints from the corporations and shareholders who finance the political system, is also spilling over into dangerous and potentially criminal territory. The FBI director, Louis Freeh, confirmed that he has assigned a 25-agent task force to investigate the Democrats' Asian-American fund-raiser John Huang and his work at the commerce department, and to check if his security clearances were misused.

It was a relief to turn from all this to a party in a place that is one of the best kept secrets of Washington. Behind the depressingly boring concrete shoebox of the US state department lurks a hidden jewel. The seventh floor is power, where the secretary of state and power-brokers dwell, but the eighth floor is a Potemkin palace of 18th century grandeur.

Nestling within the concrete shell are a series of reception and dining and ballrooms in which Mozart or Metternich would have felt entirely at home. The walls are panelled in expensive woods. Until they roll it up for dancing, they boast that the carpet in the ballroom is the largest in the western hemisphere.

WITH one of the Air Force string quartets sawing away at some pleasant Corelli, and white wine and smoked salmon canapés being handed around, it was a perfect place for Madeleine Albright to throw her private celebration. And it was interesting that among her friends, family and academic colleagues was her fellow newcomer to the very highest council of state, the former Republican senator-turned-defence secretary, William Cohen.

In her brief remarks to all those present, the new secretary of state noted: "I believe in the possibility of a marriage of force and diplomacy." Quite so. She saw how well an American military presence worked in Haiti and Bosnia. But Cohen had been at pains in his own remarks that week to stress his deep caution about the deployment of US troops.

The consequent prospect of a small crack, if not a breach, being opened between them was too tempting for Washington's mischief-makers to avoid. Indeed, Washington dinner parties of late have been enlivened by the little ditty:

"Troops Away!," cries Madeleine A.
"They're not goin'!," retorts Bill Cohen.

Ms Albright therefore used her party to defuse the situation, pretending to see him sidling out of the room as she began talking of the happy union of force and diplomacy, and calling out to him gaily, "Caught you just in time".

"I'll only ask for American troops when it's really necessary," she cajoled him.

The room chuckled indulgently, recalling her battles with the former chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, General Colin Powell. It is now the conventional wisdom among the Clinton intimates that his presidency only began to recover after Powell retired, to be replaced by the less pompous, less insubordinate and less political General John Shalikashvili.

But there are two points to bear in mind. Gen Shalikashvili succeeded because Clinton's first defence secretary, Les Aspin, was sacked and that wily old owl William Perry was brought in to add some much-needed ballast to Clinton's national security team. Second, the general retires this year, and so does his obvious successor, the Nato supreme commander, General George Joulwan.

Given the damage a badly run Pentagon did him in his first two years, one hopes Clinton has thought this through. He has to take a risk in appointing a new chairman of the joint chiefs to join an untried defence secretary in Cohen. And like Clinton himself, Cohen is no veteran, obtaining the usual student and marriage deferments from military service in the Vietnam war.

It is also worth noting that the new defence secretary has never run anything larger than the mayor's office in the small town of Bangor, in Maine. Cohen is now responsible for more than 2 million military and civilian personnel and a budget of $260 billion (about the size of the entire Netherlands economy).

He is also a poet who writes rather lurid verses about the horror of nuclear war. For example:

Suppose the earth became a ball of sun
And flamed until it cindered into dust
And all the blood that had ever spilled and stained
The earth was boiled in one atomic vat.

Human beings may rejoice that such a sensibility now sits in the Pentagon's hot seat; hard-faced military men may take another view despite the reputation that Cohen carefully cultivated in the Senate of being a modest hawk. In fact, as a senator, he was remarkably out of touch with Clinton's policies.

Cohen differs strikingly from Clinton over missile defence systems, which most of us still know as Star Wars. He wants to go ahead and build one quickly, and has hinted that he thinks that Clinton's CIA appointees were politically nobbled and made to issue intelligence estimates saying there would be no serious threat from rogue states for seven years.

AS A SENATOR, he was wonderfully cruel about the Clintonite dithering over Bosnia, skewering them splendidly with the accusation that their various spokesmen were "indulging in contrapuntal soliloquies". He mocked their claim that the troops would be out within a year, and that the goals in the Balkans were shifting "like a shimmering mirage in the desert".

He also voted to curtail the president's authority to send US troops on peacekeeping missions. Politically, he was even sharper, accusing the Clinton White House of having "a smell of Watergate — this administration has a lot to answer for".

Apart from the fact that he is the kind of Republican fig-leaf who allows Clinton to pontificate about his nobly bipartisan administration being above the usual squalor of party politics, one wonders what on earth Cohen is doing in the Clinton cabinet. Except for one thing: the Republican party found this feistily independent fellow to be equally prickly.

Cohen was the first Republican congressman to break party ranks and turn against Richard Nixon during the Watergate hearings. He turned against Ronald Reagan during the Iran-Contra scandals, saying Reagan "conducted the office as if he were an absentee landlord, while the tenants were running around smashing the windows and breaking up the furniture".

A complex and intriguing man who once wanted to be a Latin teacher and who hikes for pleasure, Cohen does not quite fit in either political party, in rather the same way that as a boy he felt rejected by the religions of his parents: his mother was Irish Protestant, and his father the son of a Russian Jewish immigrant who founded the small family bakery.

Cohen was studying Hebrew for his barmitzvah when the rabbi found he had not been circumcised, and rather than submit to the operation, Cohen rejected the religion.

"That was my turning point. Now I knew I was in this alone, and I didn't have to be part of anything that I didn't want to be."

Now he has chosen to be the token Republican in a Democratic administration whose policies he questions, helping run a foreign policy he doubts, in harness with military professionals yet to be appointed, for a president whose ethics remind him of Watergate. Even without Albright's assertive and interventionist style, Cohen is in for a bumpy ride. Still, given the unpleasantness of congressional politics and the rising stench from fund-raising swamp, he must feel he has escaped into cleaner air.

The Pot Calling the Kettle...a hot tub.
Newt
Bill

Fear cloaks brutality of Arafat's police

Shyam Bhatia in Nablus

YUSSEF ISMAIL BABA, a 32-year-old Palestinian businessman from the West Bank city of Nablus, died last Saturday after being beaten by police. On Sunday his family demanded justice and smashed the doors of the Rafidia hospital where doctors had failed to resuscitate him.

The hospital authorities responded by asking Palestinian police, armed with sub-machine-guns, to patrol the premises, including the autopsy room where Baba's body lay.

The real target of the Baba family's anger is the Palestinian secret police, who tortured him so severely that he suffered massive internal bleeding. "It was a combination of beatings and aggravated ulcers that caused his death," said a member of the hospital's medical staff, adding that Baba had severe bruising and lacerations down the entire right-hand side of his body.

Yet no doctor is prepared publicly to accuse Yasser Arafat's secret police of Baba's death, the 12th in custody since the control of West Bank cities and the Gaza Strip was handed over to the Palestinian Authority.

During the intifada, Palestinian doctors and nurses were willing to provide information about Israeli atrocities and the injuries suffered by the Palestinian population under occupation. Today the all-pervasive fear of Palestinian security forces means no one will be quoted by name.

Everyone remembers the case of the Gaza psychiatrist and human rights activist, Dr Iyad Sirraj, who enraged Mr Arafat last summer by telling the foreign press that human rights abuses under the Palestinian Authority surpassed those of the Israelis. Dr Sirraj's defiance led to his imprisonment without trial. He was tortured in prison until international pressure led to his release.

Yussef Baba was at home on New Year's Day when he received a note asking him to look in at police headquarters. That was the last his brothers, Saeed, Suleiman, Omar and Mahmoud, saw of him until they were invited to view his body in the hospital morgue.

"We asked after him every single day," said Saeed, a blacksmith in the Nablus kasbah. "Every day they would tell us it was just a routine investigation and he would be released the following day." After a month, the brothers contacted a local human rights group, which discovered that Baba was dead. He had never appeared before a judge, nor had his arrest been explained.

Hospital authorities say Baba was admitted three times during his month-long stay in prison. Each time he was suffering from bleeding ulcers and doctors advised that he be allowed to stay in hospital. They were overruled by police on every occasion.

"Several Palestinians have been killed as a result of torture under interrogation," said Law, the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment. "Palestinian security services have been known to use many methods of torture, including severe beatings, burning with cigarettes or hot irons, and sleep deprivation."

Iran hatches anti-Bonn plot

Ian Traynor in Bonn

A PROMINENT Iranian newspaper editor disappeared last week, leaving behind a letter detailing his secret arrest and torture last year by Iranian secret police, who forced him to pretend he was a spy for the German government.

Faraj Sarkuhi's ordeal was designed to turn him into blackmail material for use against the German government. The aim was to secure a favourable verdict in a terror trial in Berlin, which would otherwise probably convict top Iranian officials for state terrorism in Germany.

The judgment in the trial, repeatedly postponed, is expected in April. In the trial, one Iranian and four Lebanese are accused of murdering three Iranian Kurds in a Berlin restaurant in September 1992.

In connection with the murders, German prosecutors have also issued an international arrest warrant for Iran's intelligence chief, Ali Fallahian. The German security services believe Mr Fallahian is linked to official terror operations mounted by the Iranian embassy in Bonn, suspected of being the headquarters of Iran's intelligence operations in Europe.

The secret police, Mr Sarkuhi said in his letter, arrested then tortured and interrogated him for 47 days last November and December. While he was in detention, they faked his departure to Germany, and then forced him to declare at a press conference in Tehran on December 20 that he had been out of sight because he had been in Germany. He was released after the press conference, and during his period of liberty he wrote his letter detailing the plot, and expressing foreboding about his fate. It was dated January 3. Mr Sarkuhi and his brother have not been heard from since January 27, and there are fears for his life.

The Berlin daily paper, Tageszeitung, which obtained the full text of the letter, said last week that Mr Sarkuhi's mother in Tehran received a call from the secret police. "We had one of your children and now we have two," she was reportedly told.

In the letter, Mr Sarkuhi wrote: "I don't know what to write. The end is near. If someone gets hold of this letter, they should give it to my wife three days after my arrest or one day after my death so she can publish it."

Mr Sarkuhi spent years in jail under the Shah of Iran and is a prominent member of a group of 134 intellectuals who signed a 1994 petition calling for the establishment of an independent writers' association.

He said that during his detention he was forced to sign statements saying he was a German spy, confessions of marital infidelity, and statements that incriminated his friends and colleagues.

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Commons farce leaves Tories out for the count

REGULAR attacks on the poor numeracy skills of the nation's youth could, it seems, be extended to MPs. This explains why Labour won a bogus one-vote Commons victory in defeating a move to expand grant-maintained schools. It turned out later that a Tory whip, Tony Coombs, had miscounted, and that the result should have been a tie.

Labour had nothing to smirk about. Mr Coombs's figure was checked by a Labour whip, Joe Benton, who also miscounted. The Conservatives asked for a rerun of the vote, but Labour declined. So the Government's plan to increase the number of grant-maintained schools — a key part of its Education Bill — suffered an unnecessary defeat.

There was much huffing and puffing by both sides. Labour's leader, Tony Blair, purported to see the fiasco as further evidence of a burnt-out government in disarray. The Prime Minister accused Mr Blair and his shadow social services secretary, Harriet Harman, of hypocrisy in sending their children to grant-maintained schools while denying that choice to others.

Both might have done better to worry about the antiquated Commons method of counting MPs' heads as they shuffle through voting lobbies. But old-timers still cherish these arcane procedures, and it does the Opposition's morale a power of good to inflict symbolic "defeats" on the Government in the run-up to the election.

SUSPICIONS of internal Conservative party politicking were aired when the Commons was told that the Naafi (Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes) was to lose 2,000 jobs in Britain and Germany because a £400 million contract to supply food for the armed forces had gone to a private firm.

Millions of ex-Service personnel have fond memories of the Naafi — a non-profit-making company operating under government charter — which has fed and entertained the armed forces for 75 years.

The Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo — already embroiled in controversy over plans to spend £60 million on a new royal yacht — evidently knew nothing about it. And fingers were pointed at Michael Heseltine, Deputy Prime Minister and a rival to Mr Portillo in any future contest for the Tory leadership.

Mr Heseltine is responsible for the presentation of Government policy. A Tory backbencher, Robert Key, who will lose 600 Naafi jobs in his Salisbury constituency, wanted to know which ministers knew — and, by implication, which were not told — about awarding the food contract to an outside bidder. Was it a ploy to cast Mr Portillo, darling of the Tory right, in the role of villain?

BOWING to pressure from consumer groups and Opposition MPs, the Government is to set up an independent council of scientists and safety experts to try to restore public confidence in British food and agricultural produce after the scares over *E. coli*, salmonella, listeria and cases of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease linked to BSE.

The Agriculture Minister, Douglas Hogg, said that the council, which will not be appointed until after the general election, was necessary because the public no longer believed assurances on food safety by ministers and civil servants. This arises largely because the Government, through its Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, is felt to be too close to farming and food manufacturing interests.

But the Consumers' Association complained that the council's role would still only be advisory, and its powers too limited.

UNIVERSITIES *may ask students* to sign "good behaviour" contracts as a condition of registration. This would be in return for formal agreements by universities and colleges covering high quality teaching and research, and arbitration procedures for complaints.

The idea is one of several being considered by vice-chancellors and principals, who are seeking contractual agreements with students that are more formal and universal than the present hotch-potch of loose agreements, which lead to disputes and legal action.

A more urgent problem, though, is cash. The Further Education Funding Council and the Department of Education, having failed to keep tabs on the size of the college population, has "discovered" the total to be 350,000 more than they thought. The Treasury is threatening not to pay the extra £84 million now considered necessary.

THE AMBITION of Diana, Princess of Wales, to be taken seriously as an ambassador for good causes, will receive a boost when BBC Television devotes a half-hour programme to her recent visit to Angola, where she campaigned against land-mines on behalf of the International Red Cross.

In her TV confessions of marital strife and adultery in 1995, she expressed a wish to assume a role as "queen of people's hearts" — seen by some as the words of a manipulative woman in search of status to replace her lost royalty. But the programme won an audience of 20 million.

As though to emphasise her new role, the princess plans to auction designer cast-offs from her wardrobe to raise £1 million for Aids and cancer charities.





Marchers parade with white crosses in memory of the Bloody Sunday victims PHOTOGRAPH JOHN GILES

Bloody Sunday inquiry rejected

David Sharrock

THOUSANDS of people marched through Londonderry on Sunday in the largest commemoration yet of Bloody Sunday, 25 years after British soldiers killed 14 unarmed civilians during an illegal civil rights parade.

The emotionally charged event was marked by a government rebuff to calls for a new investigation into the killings, pleas for the IRA to restore their ceasefire, and claims that Sinn Fein had hijacked the commemoration. Some estimates put the numbers as high as 20,000.

Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness told the parade: "This is the largest demonstration I have ever seen. It's a demonstration for justice, it is people recalling what happened 25 years ago when British terrorists came into the city, murdered 14 people, were decorated by the British queen and got away with it."

Earlier, the Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, called on John Major to reopen the inquiry. "The entire British establishment was involved in a cover-up."

The SDLP leader John Hume was present at the ceremony. He recalled Bloody Sunday as "the most traumatic day in the lifetime of every citizen in this city and certainly in mine as their representative".

The pain went very deep, he said. "Therefore it's extremely important that the total innocence of the people is formally established."

The Democratic Unionist leader in the city, Gregory Campbell, said: "Quite obviously the paratroopers took action that they ought not to have taken and innocent people died, but every year since that Sinn Fein and the IRA manipulate this event."

On Monday the campaign for a new inquiry was given support by a former Northern Ireland minister, Sir Nicholas Scott. He said: "I think year by year the memories of what happened on Bloody Sunday are reawakened . . . Widgery I don't think was a satisfactory inquiry . . . I really do think the time has come that we try to find out what the truth really was."

● The Government raised temperatures in the run-up to the marching season in Northern Ireland by producing a fudge over the Drumcree report. The Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew, responding to a review of parades and marches chaired by Peter North, accepted a proposal to set up a parades commission to mediate in disputes. But, crucially, he delayed a decision on whether it should be allowed to re-route or ban marches.

The compromise pleased *none* of the Northern Ireland parties and brought dire predictions of trouble in the months ahead.

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Working mums blamed for children's failures

Luke Harding

CHILDREN whose mothers work full-time are twice as likely to fail their exams as those with mothers working part-time, according to new research.

A two-year university study identifies "middle-class deprivation" among families where both parents choose to work full-time. Their children perform worse at school than their peers, despite the benefits of a dual income. The findings, which corroborate US research, come as more women return to work as early as possible, and rely on daycare and nannies to bring up their children.

The North London university study of 600 families in east London showed that 11 per cent of children with mothers in part-time work left school with no GCSEs. But the figure more than doubled to 25 per cent among children whose mothers worked full-time. All the families studied had fathers in full-time work.

Margaret O'Brian, who carried out the survey, described the results as "disturbing". She identifies a "critical time" immediately after school when children return home and want to talk through their day.

Some 36 per cent of children whose mothers have no job fail all their GCSEs. But researchers point to the fact that these children frequently come from homes where academic expectation is low.

Tony Evans, headmaster of fee-paying Portsmouth Grammar School, said he was concerned that professionals were neglecting their children. Mr Evans spoke of children being left to "graze from refrigerators" and said they could be made to feel "secondary".

But Sally Witcher, director of the Child Poverty Action Group, took issue with the survey's findings and questioned its methodology. "Very often women work full-time because they have to, to keep the family afloat. That is something which should be commended and not criticised," she said.

And a spokeswoman for the National Union of Teachers said: "What every child needs is interest and support from parents, whether the parents go to work or stay at home. We don't know in this survey what other factors may have an effect."

Since 1984 the number of women in full-time employment has increased by two-thirds. More than 40 per cent of mothers with children under five now work.

Eurosceptic deselected

SIR George Gardiner threatened to plunge the Conservative Party into a long and embarrassing legal wrangle last week after he was deselected by his local constituency in Reigate, Surrey, *write Lawrence Donegan and Rebecca Smithers.*

An ardent Eurosceptic and one of John Major's most troublesome backbenchers, Sir George, aged 61, lost his selection battle by 272 votes to 213 at a fractious meeting of the constituency party called after he accused the Prime Minister of being Chancellor Kenneth Clarke's "ventriloquist's dummy" on Europe.

Outside the meeting hall, Tory party members squabbled with the MP's supporters, claiming the selection meeting had been packed with "£1-a-head entryists".

Sir George's attempt to seek reinstatement later failed after members of the local party blocked his supporters' call for a meeting challenging his deselection.

He had hoped to head off the "Toffee-nosed Tendency among Reigate Tories". But the failure of the delaying tactic paves the way for the local Conservative association to press ahead with its plans to have a new candidate in place by the end of the month.

Clarke gambles on public sector pay

Guardian Reporters

THE Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, is to urge the Cabinet to take a high-risk pre-election gamble by staggering pay awards for 1.3 million public sector workers, including nurses, teachers and the armed forces.

He will call on ministerial colleagues to cushion the costs of the awards after independent pay review bodies recommended rises of between 3.2 and 3.4 per cent — well above government spending plans.

Mr Clarke will be gambling on the public workers welcoming the relatively high overall increases.

But a spokesman for the Royal College of Nursing warned: "Nurses will be disappointed about being asked to wait for even this pay increase after a year of having to battle for a fair rise of any kind."

The review bodies cover more than 700,000 nurses, doctors and therapists in the health service, as well as teachers, service personnel, and senior civil servants, including the judiciary.

Nurses are in line for a national average increase of 3.3 per cent, teachers 3.25 per cent, doctors 3.4 per cent, and the armed forces 3.3 per cent. With the Government trailing badly in the polls, ministers would be sorely tempted to award such rises in full ahead of the general election. But such expediency would run counter to Mr Clarke's prudent instincts.

Health service leaders warned that hospital and community health services would be crippled by the costs of increases of more than 3 per cent for a full year from April 1.

Staggering the increases would ease the impact on NHS trusts in 1997-98. However, the full costs would be inescapable after the second part of the rises kicked in.

Much of the attention on the pay awards, which were due to be officially announced this week, will focus on the deal for nurses, who attracted considerable sympathy last year when they were awarded a national increase of 2 per cent compared with up to 6.8 per cent for doctors.

Mr Clarke will be hoping that anger over staggering a 3.3 per cent rise this year would be curbed by nurses' satisfaction that the award represented a swing back from the much-hated local pay determination.

Mr Clarke will argue in Cabinet that staggering the pay awards would put the spotlight on Labour. But Gordon Brown, the shadow chancellor, said that a Labour government would not fund the inflation-busting rises.

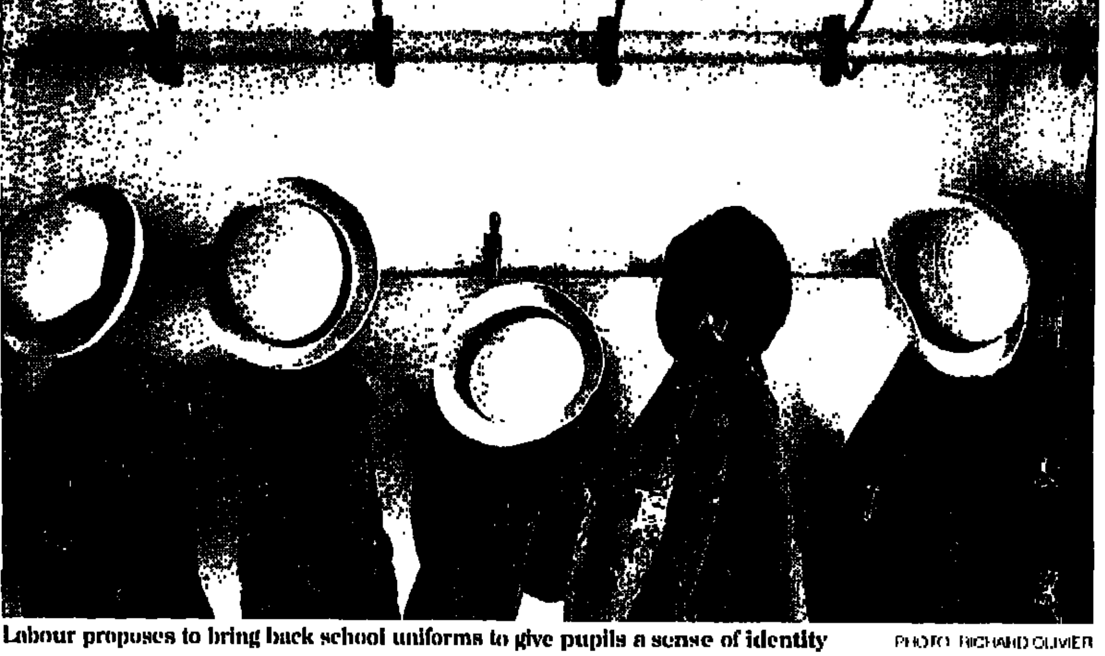
Risking confrontation with the unions, Mr Brown insisted there would be no "blank cheques" for public sector workers. He is determined to keep tight control on public spending should Labour win the election.

Leftwingers in the party made it clear that they expected Mr Brown to pay the awards in full. Mr Brown, however, did not rule out the option of staging the awards — even though Labour in the past has rejected such an approach.

The Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, is facing the most difficulty in the pay settlement row. He has not budgeted enough cash to pay the 227,000 servicemen and women the expected 3.3 per cent increase.

Mr Portillo, who claimed that Labour would impose huge defence cuts, gave away £460 million to the Treasury in November after officials pointed out that he had overspent his planned budget by £700 million this year.

Mr Portillo will now have to plead with Mr Clarke to raid the £2.5 billion government reserves before the election, or tell disgruntled service personnel they will have to have a phased award, with no full implementation until October or January next year.



Labour proposes to bring back school uniforms to give pupils a sense of identity PHOTO: RICHARD OLIVIER

Schools' adviser defends 'bad teacher' claims

John Carvel

CHRIS WOODHEAD, the chief inspector of schools, was coming under pressure this week to explain evidence that he may have exaggerated numbers of inadequate teachers to support his theories that children were being let down by the failure of progressive classroom methods.

He said a year ago that statisticians at the Office for Standards in Education were able to deduce from inspection evidence about the number of poor lessons that there were 15,000 "incompetent" teachers. This amounted to more than 4 per cent of the teaching force.

It became a central plank in his campaign to lift standards, in spite of complaints from the Teacher Training Agency that his criticism was becoming counter-productive. Tony Blair was so keen to align Labour to the Ofsted view that he confirmed that Mr Woodhead would remain in office under Labour.

However, according to its annual report, Ofsted inspectors have reported only a handful of staff to head teachers under procedures ordered by the Prime Minister.

This will confirm figures provided to Don Foster, the Liberal Democrat education spokesman, showing that none of the lessons inspected between April 1996 and January 1997 could be regarded as "very poor" and only 1 per cent were "poor".

Mr Woodhead stood by the estimate of 15,000 incompetent teachers, saying: "I have no reason to believe that it was statistically insecure." But his main emphasis was to cast doubt on his own inspectors' judgment in reporting so few poor teachers. "It is always difficult to confront another human being and say: 'sorry, but I think there are problems with your professionalism'," he said.

Meanwhile better national results for 11-year-olds showed that tests were succeeding in driving up standards in the classroom, Nick Tate, the Government's chief curriculum adviser, said last week.

Schools knew the results would be published in league tables, and the improved performance has increased pressure on Gillian Shephard, the Education and Employment Secretary, to publish tables for seven-year-olds.

But Mr Tate denied the better results were due to league table pressure. "You cannot necessarily turn your teaching around overnight. There is a new sense of urgency that is happening, irrespective of league tables, that schools need to be institutions with a culture of continuous improvement."

He was speaking after analysis of the 1996 results showed no improvement for seven- and 14-year-olds. Spelling, grammar and mental arithmetic are still giving such cause for concern that special papers are to be set this summer to test them.

● Labour would encourage schools to bring back compulsory uniforms to help rebuild a sense of identity and discipline, David Blunkett, the shadow education secretary, said last week in a further move to associate the party with traditional educational values.

Pre-Electoral Tension reaches fever pitch

SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

AS THE hubbub in the Chamber grew, Betty Boothroyd rose. There were, she said, "a lot of members of this House who have a good deal of Pre-Electoral Tension".

The Speaker was right. PET has much in common with PMT. There are the same blinding flashes, hot flushes, rages, tears and recriminations. But the worst sufferer from PMT is a model of calm rationality compared with the Commons in its present mood. There is a manic edge to it, which I recall from my days as a football fan. The madness comes from the group's single-minded obsession, simultaneously feeding on it and making it more intense.

For one side to concede that the other might have a point would be impossible, even if any voice could be heard through the barrage of noise, the scream-bites which have taken over from the sound-bites. It would be like calling "Three cheers for our sportsmanlike opponents!" at Millwall.

Most bizarre of all, one of last week's rows was over the single European currency, a topic on which the two main parties' views are hard to separate. There are minor variations, some shading in the dogma, but both believe that on the single currency we should wait and see what happens. This has nothing to do with the national interest, but is meant to keep Eurosceptics of both right and left pliant until after the election.

But the closer the parties are, the more they pretend to detest each other. Last week it was Tony Blair's turn to go mad. He starts calmly enough, but those of us who have lived with him for years know the signs, and we mentally hoist the storm cones. (In Hong Kong I was told that people in tower blocks know a typhoon is coming when the water begins to slosh about in the toilet bowls. The Commons bathrooms must have been awash.)

Mr Blair said that a few weeks ago Mr Major had said he expected Tory candidates to endorse the "keep our options open" policy. "Is that still your expectation of Conservative candidates?"

Mr Major flannelled about how there were plenty of Eurosceptics on the Labour side (true), about how Mr Blair's position had changed (also true), how he said one thing in public and another in private (probably true).

Mr Blair ignored all this and demanded to know why the Prime Minister could not even urge his own candidates to support his own policy. Then his voice rose to a screech, a bit like the end of a Tina Turner song.

"Weak! Weak! Weak!" he shouted, pointing at the Tory benches in the manner of a football hooligan. (Is he like this at home? "How would you like your tea, dear?" "Weak, weak, weak!"; "What veneer do you suggest for our new coffee table?" "Teak! Teak! Teak!")

But it worked. On the BBC Six O'Clock news, the "Weak!" scream-bite easily fended off Mr Major's waffling. It's not the time of the month; they are all on their electoral cycle.

Oxfam sees mines ban as diversion

David Fairhall

BRITAIN'S support last week at the Geneva disarmament conference for a new United Nations effort to ban land-mines was promptly condemned by Oxfam as little more than a diversionary tactic.

The UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, denounced anti-personnel mines as "weapons of terror" and called on the 61 conference states to negotiate a total ban.

But Britain's ambassador, Sir Michael Weston, argued that an agreement prohibiting the export of mines was a practical start and could be achieved before the current session ends in September.

Relief agencies, helped by the Princess Diana's recent well-publicised support, have put intense pressure on the British government to take an uncompromising lead.

But the Government argues that the call for a total ban serves little purpose unless the big producers, such as China, Russia and India, are persuaded to implement it.

Although Britain's objective is a complete ban on the production, use and export of anti-personnel mines, a Foreign Office minister, David Davis, also made the case for a step-by-step approach. "We are starting with an export ban because we believe this is the fastest way to get moving towards the goal of a total ban," he said.

An Oxfam spokesman said: "The danger is that the Geneva move will prove to be a loss-leader and will in effect slow down the achievement of a total ban."

Hunger strikers close to death

Alan Travis

A NIGERIAN on hunger strike, lying close to death in Rochester prison, Kent, last week agreed to medical treatment as ministers dropped their plans to move 200 immigration detainees at the jail to a new prison ship.

Refugee groups have voiced anger at Home Office Minister Ann Widdecombe's refusal to give any details of the other five asylum seekers on hunger strike except to give details of the criminal background of one. It is believed those still refusing fluids include a Tanzanian, Salem Mohamed Salem, whose appeal was due to be heard this week.

They have been on hunger strike since January 6. Eleven others are refusing food, claiming they are being treated like criminals while their applications are being processed.

"People are starving themselves to death and we are not even being told who they are," said Nick Hardwick, chief executive of the Refugee Council. "We need to know the names of all those involved."

Ejike Emenike, aged 30, was persuaded by the Rev David Haslam, of the Churches Commission on Racial Justice, to agree to rehydration treatment so he could launch a legal battle for bail and temporary admission to an address in Britain.

"He was very weak and it was only when we told him that their protest was being nationally reported that he began to cheer up a little bit and take notice. I said to him it was very important that their stories be told," said Mr Haslam. "He is deeply committed to this protest and believes, like I do, that from a Christian viewpoint this is a completely inhuman way to treat people. He agreed to take in fluids although he is still refusing food."

In the Commons, Miss Widdecombe insisted the hunger strikers would not be force-fed. During furious exchanges with Labour's Ann Clwyd she was asked how she could "equate your Christian conscience with allowing these people to die".

Clearly angered, Miss Widdecombe replied: "I do not want any of these detainees to die. That is why the medical attention is available. But it must be their decision whether to take it up or not."

She went on to announce that the Government had dropped plans to move the 200 immigration detainees at Rochester to a new prison ship to be moored near Portland in Dorset.

In their original appeal, dated January 4, the hunger strikers said many of them were political asylum seekers who had already been held in prison for more than two years without the right to a trial before a judge. "Numerous suicide attempts, hunger strikes and official complaints by individuals have gone unheard," said their joint statement. "The response of the authorities is forceful removal to prison conditions without a trial."

There are 750 detainees in detention centres and prisons in Britain at an annual cost of £20 million. The Home Office says they are held in prisons because of "a potential for violence or disorder or because of the need for closer medical supervision".

Mr Emenike arrived in Britain last February after he claimed he had been beaten and held by the Nigerian state security forces for delivering sermons in which he denounced the government in the wake of environmental campaigner Ken Saro-Wiwa's execution.

The protesters, who are Nigerian, Russian, Romanian, Algerian and Somalian, are among 180 immigrants at the jail. Some have been detained for up to two years.

A Home Office spokeswoman said: "The vast majority of those detained are people who have had their asylum application turned down and are awaiting deportation notices . . . There are specific reasons for imprisoning people, and it is used sparingly. Conditions in the jail are on a par with most of the detention centres we use."



On the stump . . . Kate Hoey, Labour MP for Vauxhall, and Labour candidate Ben Chapman 'blitzing' for votes in the close-fought Wirral South byelection called for February 27. Labour's strategists decreed that 50 doors shall be battered on during each hour of blitzing. The byelection was caused by the death of the Conservative MP Barry Porter, who held the seat in 1992 with an 8,183-vote majority

College mars Britain's image

David Hencke

A FORMER college principal was condemned last week for presiding over a "seriously flawed" £1.4 million overseas student operation which has tarnished Britain's academic reputation abroad.

The National Audit Office says that police are now investigating possible widespread abuse and fraud in the running of Swansea Institute of Higher Education's overseas student courses in Malaysia, Indonesia, China and Kenya.

Gerald Stockdale, aged 58, resigned as principal after a vote of no confidence by the governing body last year. The vice-principal, Hywel Rees, has been suspended pending an internal inquiry.

The auditors' investigation says that Dr Stockdale was found to have spent at least £65,000 on 33 trips — 18 of them described as "ill-judged" — to launch the courses.

He also negotiated a £314,000 pay-off if he was dismissed, giving him three years' salary and an enhanced pension. However, when he resigned last year he received £127,000 — six months' salary and seven years' enhanced pension.

The report concluded: "The United Kingdom has an outstanding reputation for the quality of the courses that it offers to overseas students. It is therefore regrettable that the arrangements at the insti-

Would-be priest takes wedding vows

BRITAIN'S army of teenagers on work experience — already responsible for stitching up hospital wounds and reporting on murder trials — has broken yet more controversial new ground, *writes Martin Wainwright.*

Acting on the "Go for it" guidelines of career officers, an 18-year-old theological student stepped in to conduct a young couple's wedding, when a muddle over timing led to the vicar arriving an hour late.

Although the fresh-faced amateur priest did a technically excellent job, slipping Rodney Earnshaw's ring on to Shirley Wilson's correct finger and cruising through the responses, his initiative ended in disaster.

"I'm terribly sorry," said a Wakefield diocesan voice on the phone to the Earnshaws a week after the £8,000 ceremony in Golcar, near Huddersfield. "But the lad wasn't ordained; in fact he'd only just got his A levels. You're not husband and wife in the eyes of either God or the law."

Rodney and Shirley are suing for the cost of a new wedding, but expressed grudging admiration for the un-named student, who was doing work experience as a server, or church assistant.

Rodney, a night-shift worker aged 25, said: "I thought the lad was a bit young but he was incredibly believable and we had no reason to doubt him."

The vicar, Rev Robin Townsend, arrived at St John the Evangelist's church at the end of the ceremony, after the teenager, who had stepped in out of a sense of Christian duty, had confidently asked more than 100 guests if they knew of any just cause or impediment to the proceedings.

Mr Townsend, standing in for St John's incumbent, Rev Martin Crompton, who was away, said he had not been informed of a time change and had watched the final moments at the altar aghast.

"To say that I was surprised that the wedding had gone ahead is an understatement — I was shocked and horrified," he said. "I haven't a clue who the lad is. The whole thing is very unfortunate and I am very sorry for the couple."

In Brief

THE week-long struggle to evict anti-roads activists from tunnels beneath the Fairmile protest camp in east Devon ended when the last of the human moles came safely to the surface on January 30.

Scum also rises, page 23

JOHN MAJOR is backing England's bid to stage the 2006 World Cup finals after it emerged that Uefa, the European football body, was giving its full support to Germany's claim.

A FORMER Wren said by a psychiatrist to be suffering permanent mental scarring as a result of severe sexual harassment in the Royal Navy has launched a £150,000 claim against the Ministry of Defence.

THE Government has approved the sale of more than 350 armoured cars and police vehicles to Indonesia, despite an admission that similar vehicles had been used to repress pro-democracy demonstrations.

MINISTERS have climbed down on some of the most controversial planned cuts in war pensions, sacrificing millions of pounds of savings in the face of widespread protest.

MORE than 1,200 civil service jobs are to be axed as part of a £105 million computerisation of the Home Office division dealing with immigration and asylum cases.

A SECOND front opened in the battle over a new royal yacht after a ship broker claimed four of his clients — two of them Scandinavian — would be interested in purchasing Britannia for their private use.

MICHAEL GRADE, who resigned unexpectedly as chief executive of Channel 4, has been appointed executive chairman of the entertainment group First Leisure, bought by his uncle Lord Delfont 15 years ago.

THE stepfather of missing Wiltshire schoolgirl Zoe Evans has been charged with the nine-year-old's murder.

FIVE senior staff at Cardiff prison, including a deputy governor, are to face disciplinary action over the treatment of a remand prisoner, who spent the last 11 days of his life shackled to a hospital bed.

NORMAN STONE — Oxford media don and *bête noire* of the liberal establishment — is quitting British academia to take up a research post in Turkey.

LORD RIPPON of Hexham, who led Britain's negotiations for entry into the European Community in the 1970s, has died at the age of 72.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
February 9 1997

The forgotten province

NORTHERN Ireland's safety is being sacrificed on the altar of the British general election. The danger was clearly illustrated at Westminster last week as the House of Commons emptied after an unruly Prime Minister's question-time, leaving only a few MPs to debate the newly published North report on parades and marches. Most MPs are only interested in the coming election and have no time for Northern Ireland. Yet the marching season in the province could start even before the nation goes to the polls, and within a few weeks any new government will face a crunch test at Drumcree. If Drumcree or any of the other summer flashpoints erupts, all hope of a return to the peace process could go up in smoke. The need for an effective and constructive policy on marching could therefore not be greater. But at this vital time, MPs' minds are preoccupied elsewhere.

Hardly less ominous was the unproductive set of exchanges which then took place when Sir Patrick Mayhew delivered the Government's cautious response to the North committee's conclusions. The nub of this independent report is the controversial proposal to give a new Parades Commission the power to control marches. But if this bold solution is indeed the answer that Professor North and his colleagues hope, Northern Ireland is to be denied the chance of finding out at the time when it matters. Sir Patrick proposes to put the idea out to consultation until the end of March, by which time the calling of the election is likely to be imminent. In effect, therefore, his action postpones any possibility of legal implementation of the proposals until after polling day. As a result the report has been rendered practically useless as a pre-emptive tool for dealing with the 1997 marching season.

Yet the North committee was established to avoid exactly this outcome. It was a recognition, after the appalling confrontations of 1996, that community relations might collapse back into endemic sectarian violence unless there was a better way of dealing with difficult marches. The Government therefore bears a very heavy responsibility if this now happens again. Its response last week was extraordinarily insipid and inappropriate. By all means let there be necessary consultations with all the relevant parties about how the North proposals can best be implemented. But those meetings could take place much more quickly than the Government proposes and they could take place against the background of a common determination of the British opposition parties to see the legislation through before the election is called. The fact that this is not happening will inevitably raise suspicions that the Government has already given in to Ulster Unionist objections to the report and will not implement it whatever the result of the consultations.

This is not to claim that there is an easy answer to a marching crisis that has loomed ever larger over the last two summers and which threatens to be even more intractable in 1997. There is not. The root cause of disputes of this kind is a genuine Protestant fear that restrictions on the right to march are a big step down a slippery nationalist slope that threatens Unionist culture and traditions in much wider ways. Those fears can only be mollified, if at all, in the context of a broad set of guarantees and an improving political situation. But there is nothing to be gained by doing nothing. A constructive and understanding approach is the only way forward. The North report provided such an opportunity. The Government has fumbled the pass. Elections may be important, but peace matters even more.

Taken for a real ride

THE PLIGHT of Britain's bus services, as revealed by the government's transport working group which reported last week, is no less alarming for being entirely predictable. It did not take vast expertise in transport economics to guess that deregulation coupled with privatisation would place this essential public service in greater jeopardy. Anyone who has stood in a wet market square and discovered that the late bus to the railway station no longer runs — or who arrives at the station and finds that the town bus left five minutes earlier — knew that in advance. Bus services were an obvious target for Thatcherite zeal.

Deregulation came first, encouraging operators to cream off profitable routes and cut back the others — unless councils paid up. A year ago, the Government was forced to acknowledge the need for a crackdown on the "bus wars" of cowboy operators. Concern over the mounting age of buses has also been admitted. Privatisation only made regulation more difficult, threatening new cuts while bringing rich pickings through takeovers and property sales.

Keeping bus routes alive is not just a matter of sentiment, and the transport minister John Watts has a point in saying that there never was a golden age. Across the country there has been a historical decline since the high point of the 1950s. The shift to the private car and the growth of out-of-town shopping has speeded this decline, particularly in rural areas. Yet it has become a vicious circle: once a service becomes too infrequent, many who would prefer to use it are driven — to drive. Nor is it just a matter of country buses. Britain is essentially an urban society, and its towns and cities are swallowing up the countryside. Yet suburban bus transport has also been badly affected.

The most bitter pill for passengers to swallow is when a rail service is discontinued, on the grounds that an existing bus service will do instead — only for the alternative to be reduced or disappear. This underlines the argument of the UK Round Table's transport working group that the Government has failed to produced the integrated transport network so badly needed. Again it is a familiar complaint, with the rider that the Government has not *failed* to do so: it has *refused* to on doctrinaire grounds. As the group points out, transport needs are becoming more complex and the "market" is even less capable than before of anticipating demand and responding to it flexibly.

Operators who cream off profits in the form of shares and hand-outs, or who cash in on undervalued privatisation ventures, are only part of the problem. But it was deeply depressing to hear the feeble response of the shadow transport secretary Andrew Smith on the subject last week. And there is no point in talking of the need for new vehicles and services without acknowledging that this will require government investment. The environmental gain is self-evident: one double-decker has the capacity of 20 private cars. But, above all, buses satisfy a huge social need: their principal users are the young, the old, and the poor. We, and particularly they, need the buses.

Blind eye to human rights

THE WORLD remains a very unfree place, as we are regularly reminded. The human rights committee of the UN meets every year, and Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch issue annual reports. So does the US State Department, which pronounced last week, but its contribution has to be held up to a sharper light.

It was the report's coverage of China which attracted most attention in the news agency summaries. No dissidents, it said, were known to be "active at year's end". They had all been silenced by intimidation, exile or various forms of imprisonment: these include "administrative" detention which does not require even the normal charade of legal process. It is hard, perhaps impossible, to weigh up the most serious human rights violations in some sort of relative balance. The same report accuses Turkey of "forcibly displacing" more than half a million non-combatants in its campaign against the separatist Kurds. It finds Indonesia guilty of serious abuses in East Timor, with further instances of killings, disappearances and torture. But the verdict on China must surely tip the scales.

It is all the more amazing, therefore, that the new US secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, should be preparing to visit Beijing before the end of this month. The Chinese foreign ministry took evident pleasure in announcing the visit. The subtext to any Chinese dissidents who may be still at large, and who might be encouraged by the State Department's report, is that deeds count for much more than words.

Diplomacy has to go on, but the discrepancy is excessive. Only little Cuba suffers from US displeasure for its own less grievous human rights abuses. In Beijing, Ankara and Jakarta, the violators must be quietly laughing.

Can Biko's killers ever find peace of mind?

Donald Woods

AND SO the chickens of 1977 are coming home to roost. Last week's announcement that five men would apply to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission to confess to the killing of Steve Biko was a dramatic breakthrough and a striking continuation of that tragic story of 20 years ago.

And the truth commission, reviled in some quarters as being a device to let killers off the hook, has had a week or two of spectacular successes. They have also flushed out the killers of Matthew Goniwe and his fellow victims from the Uitenhage area, and former policemen have been emerging at a dizzying rate to testify to past crimes.

In September 1977, Biko was beaten into a coma in the Eastern Cape city of Port Elizabeth during interrogation by security police officers, and when they couldn't revive him they drove him 1,000 km to Pretoria, where he died two days later.

He had, by the age of 38, become South Africa's leading anti-apartheid personality still at large, though he was under banning orders, forbidden to travel, write or communicate publicly or to speak to more than one person at a time. The authorities feared him because of his work with the Black Consciousness Movement he had founded and led.

The Eastern Cape security police were notoriously brutal, and the South African government took a chance in letting them question Biko because there was a real risk of harm to him, and the Vorster government knew this would be a disaster for them. Unfortunately, the police minister, Jimmy Kruger, was a weak man who liked to court popularity with his security police by giving them a free hand with political prisoners.

When they found they had gone too far in beating Biko, Kruger tried to take the heat off by claiming Biko had died after a hunger strike. At a provincial congress of the National Party Kruger jokingly agreed with one delegate that it was "democratic to give prisoners the democratic right to starve themselves".

Within days, though, the starvation story was abandoned, because I had gone with Biko's widow to view his body at a small rural mortuary and it was obvious he had lost no weight from his normally bulky body. It was equally obvious that he had been badly beaten up, with marks of blows to the head, which explained why we had been given the runaround by police and mortuary officials before finally tracking down the body.

In the limited form of inquest that followed, it emerged that Biko had been brutally and callously treated, and few observers believed the new security police version that Biko had bumped his head on a wall during a scuffle with them.

What also emerged was that nine security policemen had access to him in his last days. Their names were published in 1978 in my biography of Biko together with the allegation: "One or more of these nine struck the blows that killed Steve Biko."

The five who came forward to confess last week were familiar to me — they had been among the nine identified then. They were Col Harold Snyman, Lt Col G Nieuwaudt, Warrant Officers R Marx and J Beneke and Captain D Siebert.

Another of the nine was Colonel P Goosen, who died several years ago after being promoted to police commissioner, and the remaining three are Warrant Officers W Wilken, B Coetzee and J Fischer, believed to be living in Pretoria. Now that the first five have come forward to confess, there may be additional testimony which links the remaining three to the crime, or they may be moved to confess themselves before being subpoenaed.

But two of the main culprits in the cover-up — Kruger and Vorster — are both dead, and so far none of the state doctors who saw Biko in prison has volunteered to testify.

It seems, however, that they will have to, as the commission has announced it will pay particular attention to their conduct. Two of them were later struck off and one of them, Ivor Lang, says he doesn't see why he should be required to face more questioning. Probably, however, he will have to revise his attitude and testify.

Though amnesty is by no means automatic, its prospect, should the commission be satisfied that contrition is genuine and confession full, has undoubtedly brought these killers out of the woodwork. Most of the families concerned are prepared to forgive the killers of their loved ones if they feel there is genuine sorrow and provided they disclose all that happened.

BIKO'S mother, Alice, said shortly before her death last year: "Yes, I would forgive my son's killers. I am a Christian, and we Christians do forgive. But first I must know who to forgive and what to forgive, which means I must be told fully what happened and why."

The rest of the family have been reluctant to agree, but may have to now that prosecution is not a real possibility in the absence of evidence. The truth commission route at least supplies the vital ingredient of finding out what happened, which, in the final analysis, is the most important thing.

Simon Wiesenthal, the Nazi hunter, said what he wanted was justice, not revenge, and that is what the truth commission and the South African people are in effect saying when they embark on this unique experiment in national reconciliation.

The South Africans want to lance the apartheid boil as soon as possible, to let the poison drain out for the whole nation to see, so as to begin the healing process. There is, in the process, a price to pay, and in some circumstances killers are being allowed to walk free. But there's the rub — how free is free in a country that knows you for a killer?

To forgive is one thing; to forget another. And the fulfilment of justice does not always require a prison sentence. Sometimes it is more a question of conscience and perpetual remembrance.

Donald Woods was editor of the Daily Dispatch in South Africa until arrested and banned in 1977 for publishing details of Steve Biko's killing. He lived in Britain until his return to South Africa last month to teach journalism in Johannesburg

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Inkatha hovers at the political crossroads

Eric Chambon in Johannesburg

THE impression given by Chief Mangosuthu Butholezi's Zulu-dominated Inkatha, following its national congress on January 26, is that of a party adrift and contemplating the worst possible options as a way out of its difficulties.

Urged on by Buthelezi, Inkatha refused the hand held out by its rival, President Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC), and rejected a proposed amnesty for violent acts committed in confrontations between the two parties in the Inkatha stronghold of KwaZulu-Natal. These clashes have claimed more than 14,000 lives since the early 1980s.

Buthelezi himself has backed his party's hardliners in their open conflict with moderates who favour Inkatha becoming a real player in the country's political process.

Two of the party's most important figures advocating a dialogue with the ANC — Inkatha chairman and KwaZulu-Natal regional premier Frank Mdlalose, and Ziba Jiyane, Inkatha's general secretary — reacted by announcing their resignations for "personal reasons". While these departures have helped Buthelezi reinforce his authority over the party, they have also drawn attention to Inkatha's difficulties in joining the political establishment of the "new" South Africa.

In the days of apartheid, Inkatha used to present itself as an alternative to the ANC, even when this resulted in armed conflict with Mandela's party and dialogue with the white government. Clinging to its demands for an autonomous KwaZulu-Natal region, Inkatha has gradually become marginalised since the multiracial elections of April 1994. This has led to the party on occasions dropping right out of the political process before reversing its decision and assuming the role of a responsible opposition party.

Two factions have gradually emerged within the party that are polarised around these two options, with Buthelezi himself throwing his weight behind one side or the other, depending on circumstances.

So, while Inkatha has cut itself off from the political process by refusing to take part in shaping the new constitution, thereby placing its own legitimacy in doubt, Buthelezi continues to hold the position of minister of home affairs in Mandela's government of national unity. Meanwhile Inkatha will not rule out the possibility of allying itself with other opposition parties to help undermine the ANC's political dominance.

Buthelezi: reinforced authority over party

This two-faced approach has resulted in Inkatha losing much of its credibility and driving it into an electoral corner. In the municipal elections last year, for example, it obtained less than 1 per cent of the votes outside KwaZulu-Natal. Even in its own backyard, Inkatha has lost ground to the ANC, which won control of the province's larger cities. With its claims for autonomy dismissed, Inkatha now runs the risk of losing control of KwaZulu-Natal itself in the next round of elections, set for 1999.

Given this prospect, there is a tendency in Inkatha to switch back to a policy of opting for the worst possible scenario. The party's new chairman, Ben Ngubane, has expressed his wish to initiate a dialogue with the ANC, and there has been a sharp reduction of political violence in KwaZulu-Natal in recent months.

People living in the province long for peace. Mandela's ANC-led government has strengthened military and police measures there. It wants to head off a confrontation, but many Inkatha activists are hardliners who are not prepared to compromise.

(January 29)

Daughter fights for Nigeria's lost leader

Afsané Bassir Pour in New York meets Wuraola Abiola, who still awaits news of whether or not her father is alive

WHAT Wuraola Abiola, the 25-year-old daughter of the Nigerian leader Chief Moshood Abiola, fears most is that the world will forget her father, who has been languishing in a Nigerian prison in his country for the past two years.

Wuraola, who has just completed postgraduate studies at Imperial College in London, had better plans for her life than haunting the corridors of foreign parliaments, talking to journalists and appearing on television programmes.

Her father, a multimillionaire philanthropist, was elected president of Nigeria on June 12, 1993. His "Hope 1993" election campaign, conducted under the supervision of international observers, won him 58 per cent of the votes in both the Muslim north and the Christian south of the country.

But when the president of the day, Ibrahim Babangida, annulled the election and threatened to issue a warrant for his arrest, Chief Abiola left the country. After a year spent abroad talking to heads of state, Chief Abiola returned to Nigeria, proclaimed himself president in June 1994, and was promptly arrested. Babangida himself was ousted from office by another military coup.

Abiola was put on trial on July 6, 1994, but the proceedings became bogged down in procedural arguments. Divisions appeared even in his own family, particularly about the choice of the defence lawyer. On June 4, 1996, the jailed chief's wife, Kudiratu Abiola, was killed in a car crash that some suspect was the result of foul play. Since October 1994, Chief Abiola has been deprived of nearly all visits and contacts with the outside world.

Wuraola, who bears a striking resemblance to her father, is determined not to give the impression of being a "daughter who misses her father". She says: "I want to show you the man and his vision, a vision which has convinced the vast majority of Nigerians, so you realise the great injustice that has been done to him." But she reveals her underlying anxiety when she says: "All I want to know is whether my father is still alive. Nobody has seen him in the past two years."

Wuraola says she is concerned that his mind may be affected. "I'm not asking for much: Just tell me my father is still alive. He is a man who can't sit around doing nothing. I can't imagine him all alone, without books or newspapers; he could go out of his mind."

Amnesty International is also worried about his health. The human rights group says Chief Abiola has a kidney ailment and high blood pressure but is being denied medical treatment.

He is one of the 43 "prisoners of conscience" Amnesty International has adopted in Nigeria, but his plight is of more immediate concern to the Nigerians who voted for him. Among the other political prisoners Amnesty International has adopted in Nigeria is General Olesegun Obasanjo, president from 1976-79,



Chief Abiola: denied medical treatment PHOTO: ENRIQUE SHORE

who has also been imprisoned since 1995. South Africa's President Nelson Mandela has dedicated his autobiography to the general: "To my friend General Obasanjo, who towers head and shoulders over many of those who hold high office in the world."

Wuraola is keenly aware of the tireless efforts that non-governmental organisations are making and is grateful to them. But she feels that governments ought to be doing something. "Even if this military regime makes a success of its economic programme — which seems highly improbable to me — how can one go on doing business with it knowing that honourable men like my father are dying in prison? I spend my life talking to politicians who politely listen to me, but do nothing. Yet what I want to know is simple: Why is my father in prison? Why am I not allowed to see him?"

Asked what she had learnt from her father, she unhesitatingly answers: "Generosity and compassion." To drive the point home she recalls an incident, which she says is now well-known in Nigeria, when thieves one night came to burgle their house. "Once they got to the front door, they changed their minds. With revolvers in their hands, they rang the doorbell and asked to see my father. They told him: 'Chief, we can't steal from you, but our children are hungry. Help us.' My father spent the night talking to them."

Would Abiola be willing to abandon his claims to the presidency if he were released? "I don't know about him," says Wuraola, "but I would say 'yes' at once. I don't know how long he can survive in prison."

General Sani Abacha's military regime says it is "determined" to give up power in 1998. Will it do so? "History tells us no, but I hope I'm mistaken," says Wuraola, who is particularly worried by the growing violence in Nigeria. "This campaign of terror has spun out of control. It's both criminal and political, though nobody knows where it's coming from." She feels the violence is compounding the unpredictability of the situation in Nigeria. "What if we're presented with a piece of bad news without any explanation?" she asks.

Chief Olu Falae, another human rights campaigner, was arrested on January 15.

(January 29)

Journalist's assassination sparks unease in Argentina

Christine Legrand in Buenos Aires

THE assassination on January 29 of a journalist who specialised in uncovering corruption has touched off a wave of public anger over the seeming impunity enjoyed by criminals in Argentina.

President Carlos Menem has admitted that the murder, which took place near Pinamar, a seaside resort some 400km from the capital, may have political implications.

Jose Luis Cabezas, a young reporter and photographer working for the weekly Noticias, was said to have been seized in the early hours of the morning as he was leaving a party given by a businessman. Investigators say some six to 10 men seized the journalist, killed him and set his car on fire. He had been handcuffed and shot in the head.

Pinamar is the summer capital of all the "president's men". They include his brother Eduardo, president of the Senate, and Eduardo Duhaide, governor of Buenos Aires province and the leading candidate to step into the president's shoes in 1999. Duhaide has already offered a reward of $300,000 for any information about the killing.

The Noticias management is interpreting the murder as a warning to the magazine and to the press in general. Noticias reports have attracted several legal suits by the government. During the past six months Cabezas, as a photographer, had been involved in preparing several sensational exposés of drugs scandals involving showbusiness and political celebrities close to the government. They included articles on the killing of a fashionable disco manager in Buenos Aires (whose murder remains unsolved).

Cabezas was also the only man who had succeeded in taking a photograph of Alfredo Ybran, the mysterious businessman whom the former economy minister Domingo Cavallo (dismissed last July) branded as the principal "mafia boss".

Last summer Ybran, who has powerful connections inside the ruling Justicialist (Peronist) Party, opened a luxury hotel complex at Pinamar, which touched off new accusations of corruption from Cavallo. More recently, Cabezas had been investigating groups of police officers suspected of involvement in a spate of armed robberies and thefts along the Atlantic coast.

Cabezas's murder has revived the controversy over impunity, which is one of the main sources of people's anxiety. The manager of football star Diego Maradona, Guillermo Coppola, who was suspected of involvement in drug trafficking, was released early in January after serving three months in prison. The inquiry in his case started with a series of arrests at Pinamar.

Today, the police officers who conducted the investigation are in custody, charged with misuse of authority and giving false evidence. Also behind bars is the judge who ordered the spectacular arrest of Coppola.

Shut out of the president's circle, Menem's former wife, Zulema Yoma, regularly issues statements claiming that their only son Carlitos, who died in a helicopter crash in March 1995, was assassinated, though she has yet to produce any proof to back up her claims. But her references to the "governmental mafia", which in another context echo the allegations made by Cavallo, opposition leaders and journalists, are increasingly being accepted by the public.

On January 28 Argentine reporters and photographers held demonstrations at Pinamar and in Buenos Aires. They are demanding justice and have decided to wear black ribbons until the murder of their colleague is cleared up.

(January 31)

A forgotten master of visual expression

Michel Guerrin

Photographien
Josef Breitenbach
Schirmer/Mosel Verlag (Munich)
240pp DM98

THE work of the German photographer, Josef Breitenbach, has been largely ignored in France: he does not feature in any French dictionaries or histories of photography; no work has been published on him nor an exhibition of his work held in his home country.

Those who read German are in the fortunate position to be able to fall back on Photographien, a large album just published in Germany, which contains some long and detailed articles on Breitenbach and 152 photographs by him impeccably reproduced and laid-out.

Their arresting quality is typified by the picture on the cover of the book. It shows a woman with her elbow on a table chatting to a man dressed in a dinner jacket and holding a top hat. The photograph was taken in Munich in 1933.

The subjects' posture, the way they are looking at each other, and the setting (with its postprandial white tablecloth) suggest that they are engaged in a serious conversation about a change of government or a currency devaluation. But the woman is stark naked. This is what injects a disturbing element into the picture, which forms part of a series comprising several much more suggestive and ambiguous poses.

Breitenbach was a wine merchant's son. Born in Munich in 1896, he studied the history of art, took his first photos in the twenties, and by 1931 was describing himself as an "independent photographic reporter".

A portrait of him in 1915 shows a determined young man sporting unruly hair who looks as though he spent most of his time hanging around Munich's Bohemian cafés. He set about producing a photographic record of the city's theatrical circles, and played his part in the emergence of the illustrated press in Germany.

When the Nazis came to power in 1933, Breitenbach fled to Paris, where he made a name for himself as a portrait photographer. His subjects included James Joyce, Bertolt Brecht, Aristide Maillol, Wassily Kandinsky and Max Ernst.

In 1941 Breitenbach moved on to New York, where he taught photography, chiefly at the New School for Social Research. He died in 1985, leaving a large corpus of photographic work, which is now preserved at the Arizona Center for Creative Photography.

It is easy to see why his work has remained little known and has been overlooked by historians and museums. Breitenbach's portraits, nudes and reportage work were at odds with the kind of ideas being explored by his contemporaries.

At a time when modernism, the predominant school in the twenties, was using its clinically precise images, vertiginous angles and virtuosic laboratory techniques to bring the curtain down on the pictorialist tradition bequeathed by the 19th century, Breitenbach was still undauntedly turning out hazy landscapes, blurred faces and nudes that seemed to be swathed in gentle nostalgia.

On closer examination it becomes apparent that Breitenbach's work, far from looking backwards, relies rather on a mixture of genres for its effect. He was especially fond of juxtaposing a yearning for the past with a very bracing sense of the present, and contrasting the blurred with the clearcut, the academic with the scandalous, sentimentality with sensuality, and black and white with colour.

It was as if Breitenbach could not bear to wrench himself away from a period and a culture that had always informed his art. Some of his early portraits use frightening shadows, extreme close-ups and dramatic facial expressions in a vigorously Expressionistic manner; others are in the tradition of the 19th century; others again seem to be intended as some kind of record.


Dr Riegler and J Greno (Munich, 1933) SCHIRMER/MOSEL

Breitenbach's effigy-like portraits of famous intellectuals are tinged with religiosity. His use of montage is both modern and decorative. In his extremely daring 1933 nudes, women adopt outrageous poses which give prominence to their sexual organs.

And then there is Breitenbach's use of colour. He was one of the first photographers who dared to colour isolated motifs in his pictures. Sometimes the result almost verged on bad taste, for example the portrait of the French film star Annabella (photographed in 1933, and given a shock of flaming-orange hair in 1939), or the black-and-white portrait of Max Ernst with a red seahorse.

Equally unclassifiable are Breitenbach's photographs of children at an American nudist camp in the fifties: some are assertively pictorial, others charged with disturbing sexual overtones.

No one but Breitenbach, either, could have produced the close-up of a woman's sexual organs (1950), whose configuration is reminiscent of Gustave Courbet's controversial painting, L'Origine du Monde.

Another totally individual photograph is the last one in the book, the portrait of a sleeping Japanese woman (1968), which is so realistic she seems to have only just slipped from the photographer's arms.

The pictures included in this large and elegantly designed book will be new to many. They prove that a whole *oeuvre* can easily be overlooked by historians of photography, who love compartmentalising their field of inquiry in a manner that is as convenient as it is reductive.

(December 13)

Béjart steps back into the limelight

Dominique Frétard

A NEW ballet by Maurice Béjart (who turns 70 this year) is always guaranteed to bring out the glitterati. This was especially true of the premiere at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris of his latest offering, Le Presbytère N'A Rien Perdu de Son Charme, Ni Le Jardin de Son Eclat (The Presbytery Has Lost Nothing Of Its Charm, And The Garden Nothing Of Its Splendour), because Elton John and the rock group Queen — who, with Mozart, provided the music of the ballet — were due to go on stage at the end of the performance and receive an arts decoration from the culture minister, Philippe Douste-Blazy.

The event was organised to thank both John and Queen for their work in the fight against Aids, and to commemorate the deaths of Freddie Mercury, Queen's lead singer, and Jorge Donn, Béjart's favourite dancer, in 1991.

Since Béjart wrote in his autobiography that he preferred people to love him rather than his work, one has no qualms about saying that the choreography of the ballet is conventional, and its various sequences seemingly interminable.

There are some very fine images — white sheets used as shrouds or togas, a gorgeous dancer who throws herself on to her belly, arms outstretched, people doing toad-like hops in the manner of Mick Jagger. In addition, Mercedes Villanueva and Myrna Kamara perform some well-controlled solos.

Gianni Versace's costumes have the great merit of lending homogeneity to the event. All the dancers are stunning. Gregor Metzger, who leads the procession into a world of love and death, has the fluency of someone who slightly overdoes things — which is just right for this sixties-style musical comedy.

The new ballet is the nineties equivalent of Béjart's celebrated Messe Pour Le Temps Présent (Mass For The Present Time). Indeed Béjart indulges in a bit of self-quotation: we find the same groups of dancers clustered in a circle, the same raised or outstretched arms with clenched fists.

There was something touching about the way Béjart came on stage at the end to kiss the hands of his dancers, which protruded from the sheets they were draped in. Of course it was all slightly over the top, but Béjart has a genuine affection for his dancers.

He loved no one more than Donn, who was present on a giant screen dancing Nijinksy, Clown de Dieu. In his old age, Béjart is not afraid of appearing sentimental. By showing images of Donn, he was also saying that perhaps he had at last come to terms with the death of his partner and dancer. It was just the right moment for Queen and John to strike up The Show Must Go On. The audience gave Béjart a standing ovation.

(January 21)

Charting history in a musical hideaway

Alain Lompech

THE new Musée de la Musique in Paris, which opened its doors on January 18, follows in a good republican tradition: in 1793, the National Convention decided to set up a collection of instruments. Two years later, the Conservatoire housed a "room of ancient instruments and of those used by us which can through their perfection serve as models".

The aim of the museum, which forms part of the Cité de la Musique at La Villette, is not just to preserve models but to chart their history. The way in which its 900 instruments are exhibited in the museum's nine sections serves an educational purpose.

Interactive panels and infra-red headphones allow visitors to wander as they wish through a series of lively and in some cases game-orientated areas covering 3,000 sq m: the Musée de la Musique is a CD-Rom given flesh and blood.

Instruments, notation, composition, concert halls — their design and how it affects acoustics — audiences, concerts and their iconography are all taken into account in the museum's description of classical Western music from the Renaissance up to Pierre Boulez's Institut de Recherches et de Coordination Acoustique/ Musique (Ircam).

Exhibits come solely from the national collection, and extra-European music, past and present, is only patchily represented. But the museum's curator, Marie-France Calas, drawing on her experience as head of the national sound archive, has included Thomas Edison's phonograph and some of the sound-reproducing machines that revolutionised music's accessibility, including the "audion" invented by an American, Lee de Forest, early this century that contributed to the development of both the radio and recording industries.

Although the notion of progress is rather irritatingly hammered home, the Musée de la Musique must be counted an exemplary success.

However, the principle of placing musical development in the context of a museum exhibition has attracted criticism. The hardest thing to accept, and something that is rejected by most musicians, is the idea of imprisoning instruments in showcases.

One cannot quibble with the display of instruments that nobody plays any more, which are virtually uncopiable because they were mass-produced (such as pianos dating from the second half of the 19th century), or which were trail-blazing prototypes in the history of instrument design.

But it is very depressing to see violins, cellos, violas, lutes, guitars and harpsichords reduced to the state of mute objects. To some, they are works of art. But surely a musical instrument is less a work of art — except possibly in the case of a harpsichord with hand-painted decoration — than a tool that enables musicians to produce art.

It is true that placing musical instruments in such collections has enabled them to survive in good condition. But although hundreds of harpsichords were thrown out of windows during the French Revolution, it is a long time since ancient instruments were last used as firewood.

Despite some initial reluctance on the part of the curators, the instruments in the collection will be used for occasional concerts in a small auditorium. This is a good thing: even the finest stringed instruments are reduced to nothing more than assemblages of pieces of wood if they are never played.

Many makers have copied such pieces, but have never solved the mystery of how violinists like Yehudi Menuhin, Jascha Heifetz, Nathan Milstein, Anne Sophie Mutter or Itzhak Perlman produce the glorious sounds they coax out of the originals.

Performers of that calibre are anyway capable of making a practice instrument sound good. That is the great paradox: placed in the hands of a clumsy violinist, even the finest Stradivarius in the world is useless.

Musée de la Musique, 221 Avenue Jean-Jaurès, Paris. Closed on Monday

(January 19-20)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

U.S. Rights Report Chastises Allies

Thomas W. Lippman

THE State Department chastised several of Washington's closest allies and biggest trading partners for human rights abuses last week, saying that despite some gains "patterns of repressions and systemic human rights abuses continued in many countries, including some of the world's largest and most influential."

Among the countries cited for a wide range of abuses, such as prison brutality and curbs on freedom of speech, were close U.S. partners Turkey, Egypt and Pakistan. The report also criticized economic powerhouses courted by the Clinton administration including Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and China.

Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, releasing the department's annual country-by-country assessment of individual freedom and the rule of law, said, "Human rights are and will remain a key element in our foreign policy, both in our bilateral relationships and in our leadership within international organizations."

It was clear from the massive report, however, that while concern over rights abuses and restrictions on freedom are the determining factor in relations with some countries — notably Cuba and Burma — they are often subordinated to economic and strategic interests.

The Clinton administration has made that choice most dramatically in the case of China. Strategic and economic concerns there are so powerful that Albright, Vice President Gore and President Clinton are all planning to visit this year despite what the report called "widespread and well documented human rights abuses."

In China last year, the report said, "all public dissent against the party and government was effectively silenced by intimidation, exile, the imposition of prison terms, administrative detention or house arrest. No dissidents were known to be active at year's end."

Asked why the administration would pursue good relations with China under those circumstances while ostracizing Cuba for similar policies, Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck observed that "every country is different in this world and every country needs to be treated in our foreign policy with a particular approach. There are many different interests that the United States has in many countries of the world."

Business leaders and strategic planners have applauded this approach as a pragmatic and realistic recognition that some countries are too important to be snubbed over their human rights records, however dismal. Conversely, human rights activists have criticized the administration for maintaining ties to unsavory regimes.

The human rights report "is strong and hard hitting but what the administration needs is an equally tough and consistent human rights policy," said Mike Jendrzejczyk, Washington director of Human Rights Watch/Asia. "On China, the report documents an escalation of abuses while the White House follows a failed constructive engagement policy. How useful is a well done report if it has little or no impact on U.S. policy?"

In country after country, the report makes clear, the "many different interests" cited by Shattuck have led the administration to set aside its distaste for human rights conditions in pursuit of good relations.

In Egypt, for example, where the main U.S. interests are Middle East peace and the restraint of Islamic militancy, the State Department found that "the government's human rights record improved somewhat over the past year, although it remains poor . . . Security forces continue to mistreat and torture prisoners, arbitrarily arrest and detain persons, hold detainees in prolonged pretrial detention and occasionally engage in mass arrests."

In Saudi Arabia, where the overriding interest is oil, the report asserted that "the government commits and tolerates serious human rights abuses" and "severely limits freedom of speech and the press. The authorities do not countenance criticism of Islam, the ruling family or the government."

In Indonesia, which Clinton has visited and where the United States has growing trade interests, the State Department found that the government "continued to commit serious human rights abuses. Rising pressures for change, including those by political activists and opponents, triggered tough government actions that further infringed on fundamental rights."

The State Department report had predictably harsh words on Iran and delivered a scathing assessment of the performance of the beleaguered government of President Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia.

In Serbia, the State Department said, "the police committed numerous, serious abuses including extrajudicial killings, torture, brutal beatings, and arbitrary arrests."

Sharansky Returns To Russia

David Hoffman in Moscow

DURING one particularly difficult interrogation after his arrest on March 15, 1977, Anatoly Sharansky, a Jewish dissident, was being threatened by a Soviet KGB colonel, Viktor Volodin, in the Lefortovo prison here.

"So you want to play the hero? Go ahead, be a hero," shouted Volodin, according to Sharansky's memoir. "Only remember — we don't let heroes out of Lefortovo alive!"

Last week, two decades later, Sharansky returned to Lefortovo, not only alive but as Israel's minister of commerce and industry. And after revisiting cell No. 47, Sharansky stepped outside, perched on a snowbound wall and freely repeated the act that so frightened the Soviet authorities: He spoke out.

"I want to say that the regime I fought against doesn't exist," he said. "The people who defended it then have lost — they've lost in a big way. There is no need to forgive those who lost. I never saw this as a fight with individuals, I saw it as a fight with the system, and the system is dead."

Sharansky's visit to the prison was the capstone of an emotional four-day return to Russia for the first time since he was released in an East-West prisoner swap in 1986 and emigrated to Israel. Sharansky, who championed the right of Jews to leave the Soviet Union, was interrogated at Lefortovo for 16 months after his arrest. He was tried on charges of treason and served nine years of a 13-year sentence.

Accompanied by his wife, Avital, who waged a determined international campaign for his release from the Soviet gulag, Sharansky used his visit last week to celebrate the new openness of post-Soviet Russia.

Natan Sharansky, with his wife Avital, makes his first visit to Russia since 1986 PHOTOGRAPH: SASSON TIRAM

He has also tried to boost economic ties between Israel and Russia. But the most poignant moments of his return came as he sought to rewind the tape of history and re-examine the bittersweet memories of the dissidents' often-lonely struggle against the Soviet police state.

He laid a wreath at the tomb of his friend Andrei Sakharov, fellow dissident and designer of the Soviet hydrogen bomb. Sharansky said the only previous time he wanted to return to Russia was to pay his last tributes to Sakharov after his death in 1989, but Soviet officials refused, because they still considered him a spy for the West.

Sakharov "created the hydrogen bomb, a massive weapon, in the hopes that it would bring peace," Sharansky said at the Vostryakovo cemetery. "He honestly thought that it would do so. Then, when he understood that it can have an opposite effect, he created a new weapon: the weapon of speaking the truth, and speaking in defense of human rights. And that is the weapon, as it turned out, against which no dictatorship could defend itself."

Later, Sharansky was asked if his return to Russia would revive painful memories of the past.

"I have to tell you openly that I have no painful memories," he said, "because memories of struggle, years spent in prison, strange as it may seem, are pleasant memories. They are memories of years which might have been hard in the physical sense, but morally, those were pure and bright years when it was absolutely clear what good and evil was, where the light was and where the darkness was . . ."

On Thursday last week, he went back through the gates to "my alma mater," and observed that his old cell seemed smaller. The prison is cleaner, he added, the food rations are slightly larger, prisoners have radios, and in the brutal "punishment" cells, inmates are given blankets against the cold.

Sharansky left Moscow as a dissident who challenged Soviet power but returned as a paragon of the establishment. He met with Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and other top officials, concluded an agreement for more Russian-Israeli joint ventures, led a trade delegation of 70 Israeli businessmen and made several appearances before Moscow's resurgent Jewish community. Sharansky, 49, the leader of an Israeli party that seeks improved conditions for Russian immigrants, serves in the cabinet of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Telling It Like It Is On China

EDITORIAL

THE salient chapter in the State Department's latest human rights report is about China, and it makes grim reading. The Communist authorities have done nothing less than silence all public dissent. Some of this was done no doubt to keep control in choppy political waters. Another likely consideration was to show American critics that China does not shrink from sticking a finger in their eye. The "internationally accepted norms" that the United States calls on Beijing to stop violating are spurned by the Chinese.

The report led President Clinton to acknowledge that his policy of "constructive engagement" had so far failed to bring progress on human rights. He was quick to add that social impulses, economic change and the availability of foreign information would "inevitably" increase the spirit of liberty over time. This is a reassuring theory, but it will take years to prove out. It carries the implication that outsiders can meanwhile back off from pressing human rights. This would be a mistake. The results of either engaging or retreating are hard to predict. No matter, Americans must be true to themselves. That need not mean neglecting every other consideration, but it does mean speaking out on things that matter. It is presumably what China-bound Secretary of State Madeleine Albright means when she says she will tell it like it is.

For the focus on Chinese cruelties that the authorities depict as unwarranted interference, it would be foolish of Americans not to expect to pay some price, at least in the tone of the relationship. But it would be even more foolish of the Chinese not to expect to pay a price at least as high. After all, what is for the United States an issue of stability in a remote region is for China the core of its national interests. With American cooperation, China can reap the full benefits of working with the world system. Without it, China inevitably lags. Mrs. Albright says the overall connection is too important to be held hostage to any single issue. True, but within specific categories — say, contacts, trade or strategy — Beijing as well as Washington will suffer if China stiffs the international rules.

China is said to be confronting a harsh choice between suffering penalties for its authoritarian ways and opening up political space for internal challenge. But this is precisely the dilemma that friends of democracy ought to be pleased to see China face. The current illiberal leadership may not be happy about it, but over time the Chinese people ought to benefit from even ragged movement toward fairness and the rule of law.

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Bullying by Marines Condemned

Dana Priest

DEFENSE Secretary William S. Cohen said last week he was "disturbed and disgusted" by a videotape he had seen of a Marine hazing ritual in which newly earned parachute jump pins were ground into the chests of Marine paratroopers.

At the same time, Marine Corps officials said 52 Marines had been court-martialed since 1994 for their involvement in hazing activities. Another 34 had received nonjudicial punishment, including dishonorable discharges. "I don't think it's something we could begin to say is an isolated incident," said Maj. Scott Campbell, a Marine spokesman.

In addition to the hurtful pinning, called "blood winging" or "blood pinning" because the pin prick draws blood, other unofficial rites of passage in the Marines and other military services include having a line of Marines or soldiers repeatedly hit a colleague on the shoulder where he has just received a new badge. Consuming large amounts of alcohol in short periods of time or making a soldier or Marine do hundreds of push-ups, lug incapacitated equipment long distances or crawl through the mud are other common antics that long have been part of the military culture.

"What's a couple pin pricks? It could be an AK-47," one officer said. "Yeah, blood pinning is terrible, but war is terrible."

Hazing in the military is usually voluntary, a way to build morale and prove courage, according to Marines and other military officers. Cohen and others said some activities are necessary to build warriors capable of enduring physical pain.

"People get very charged up in this business," explained Gen. John Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "We demand that people be very tough." He said morale-building, however, should encompass only "decent behavior," which "blood winging" was not.

The hazing issue resurfaced last week when CNN aired a videotape of 1991 incidents in which pins signifying Marines had earned parachute jump wings were slammed into the chests of the paratroopers.

The 1991 video and another from 1993 were first brought to the Pentagon's attention by Dateline NBC, which aired the tapes last week.

The 1991 tape shows several Marines against a wall and other Marines violently shoving and rubbing the sharp point of the pins into the flesh of fellow Marines.

The T-shirts of the new paratroopers soon became stained with their blood and some of them collapsed in pain, only to be propped up and abused again.



A still taken from the 1991 videotape shows a U.S. Marine paratrooper undergoing hazing

Cyprus Leader Seeks To Defuse Tension

Thomas W. Lippman

THE PRESIDENT of Cyprus has given the United States a commitment that no Greek warplanes will be deployed to an air base under construction on the island at least through the end of his term 13 months from now, according to U.S. officials.

President Glafcos Clerides made the promise to U.S. diplomat Carey Cavanaugh when Cavanaugh visited the island in mid-January on a mission to defuse the latest flare-up of tension between Greece and Turkey, U.S. officials said.

The unannounced promise not to receive Greek F-16s, coupled with Clerides's public pledge to wait 16 months before receiving any components of the Russian surface-to-air missiles Cyprus has agreed to buy, was designed to give U.S. and European diplomats time to seek a solution to the long-stalemated division of Cyprus, U.S. officials and European sources said. Cypriot embassy sources in Washington said they could neither confirm nor dispute the reported pledge.

Cyprus has been divided along a tense cease-fire line since 1974, when Turkish troops landed in response to a pro-Greece coup. Turkey, which has more than 30,000 troops on Cyprus, controls the northern third of the island and recognizes it as a sovereign country. All other nations recognize Clerides's Greek-dominated government.

With Greek-Turkish tensions over Cyprus and other issues threatening to erupt into armed conflict and stymie plans for expansion of NATO this summer, the Clinton administration is considering an all-out push this year to break the Cyprus deadlock.

In her first week as Secretary of State, Madeleine K. Albright said several times that the United States is prepared to take on what she called "a heightened role" in breaking the stalemate on Cyprus, but she has given no indication of how she plans to go about it. That is because she and her aides have not figured out how to go about it, a State Department official said.

"There is a demand and a justification for making the effort," he said. "The international community needs a resolution of this issue. So the question is not whether we should, but how. We face the unwillingness of key parties to make any kind of compromise to reduce tension."

Greece and Turkey, Cold War allies as members of NATO but historic enemies, have exhibited mounting hostility to each other since the Cold War ended and have been building up military forces, as has the Greek Cypriot government.

Turkey and Greece came close to armed conflict a year ago in a dispute over ownership of a string of tiny uninhabited islands in the Aegean Sea, a dispute that prompted President Clinton to intervene to head off a conflict that could have destabilized much of southern Europe.

Each acquisition of military hardware and each movement of military forces seems to fuel Greek-Turkish suspicions and inflame tensions. When Cyprus announced plans last month to purchase 300 sophisticated anti-aircraft missiles from Russia, Turkey threatened military action to block the acquisition.

The Turks, whose planes routinely fly to Cyprus, feared the missiles would be used against their aircraft. Cyprus insisted the missiles were purely defensive.

Cyprus has no air force. But under a 1993 defense pact with Greece, it is building a military airfield at Paphos that could accommodate Greek F-16s, which would be deployed there in the event of threatening actions by the Turks. Some Cypriot officials and Richard Beattie, Clinton's special envoy to Cyprus, have said Cyprus expects the planes to be stationed permanently on the island when the facility is ready later this year.

"These are acid concerns for Turkey — Greek jets and Russian missiles on Cyprus," a U.S. official said.

By holding off on both at least until next year, Clerides has created some diplomatic breathing space. His foreign minister, Alecos Michaelides, said last month that as soon as an international diplomatic initiative begins, "We will first of all refrain from any action which will create tension."

David Hannay, who leads Britain's quest for a Cyprus solution, was due in Washington this week for consultations. But U.S. officials said they have no illusions about the difficulty of ending an impasse that has frustrated all initiatives for more than 20 years. Perhaps the biggest problem, they said, is finding a formula that would accommodate Turkey's many concerns.

A weak coalition government in Ankara is viewed as unlikely to make controversial commitments on the future of Cyprus without firm guarantees of security for the Turkish Cypriot population and some assurances about its future relations with the rest of Europe.

Arms Turn-In Boosts Liberia Peace Plan

James Rupert in Abidjan

LIBERIANS who have fought a civil war for seven years hurried last week to hand over guns and bullets to a peacekeeping force before a deadline for warring factions to disarm. The last-minute rush raised some hopes — the most substantial in years — that a peace plan is making real progress.

Disarmament centers "have been quite busy today, the same as in recent days," said an officer who identified himself as Maj. Hassan at the peacekeeping force's headquarters on Friday last week. "Everything is calm, and we hope it will remain so," he said.

For months, Liberian civilian leaders and the West African peacekeeping force have been trying to persuade the half-dozen factions that control most of Liberia's gunmen to give up their arms. The latest of several Liberian peace plans called for the fighters to be disarmed by January 31, for political campaigning to start this spring and for legislative and presidential elections to be held in May.

Until recently, the process appeared stalled. Liberians and peacekeepers guessed that there may be anywhere from 25,000 to 60,000 armed fighters in the country, and as of two weeks ago officers of the peacekeeping force counted only about 6,000 weapons handed in. But in the last week, Liberians have rushed to present arms and claim the food packages, tuition vouchers and consumer goods that are being offered by various citizen groups as incentives. Journalists at disarmament centers have reported emotional reconciliations among some fighters and a palpable sense of hope among Liberians.

As of Friday last week, more than 16,000 weapons have been handed in, peacekeepers said. In addition, the leaders of the factions have handed over substantial amounts of heavy weaponry and offered other signals that at least for now, they are giving up warfare to pursue power or wealth by other means.

Late last month, Charles Taylor, the man who started Liberia's war and who leads the most militarily powerful of the factions, handed over field guns, mortars and other artillery pieces. Taylor and his chief rival, Alhaji Kromah, have announced they will run for president.

Another factional leader, Roosevelt Johnson, has declared he will go into business.

Juror Dismissed in O.J. Simpson Trial

William Booth in Los Angeles

THE lone black juror in the O.J. Simpson civil trial was dismissed last week after the judge learned that her daughter worked for the prosecutors who failed to convict Simpson of murder 16 months ago.

Superior Court Judge Hiroshi Fujisaki ordered the new jury to ignore its 14 hours of deliberations and start over to reach a verdict. The new panel deliberated for about five hours before breaking for the weekend.

The female juror was removed from the panel after the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office faxed a letter to Fujisaki informing him that the juror's daughter works as a legal secretary at the district attorney's office.

Sources said the dismissed juror, a widow in her sixties still known only by number, once had dinner with former Simpson prosecutor Christopher Darden. A spokesman for District Attorney Gil Garcetti confirmed that the office sent the letter about the daughter's employment, but would not comment on the report that the juror had had dinner with Darden.

Fujisaki did not tell the remaining jurors why their colleague was dismissed, except to say she "has been excused for legal cause."

A new juror, an Asian-American computer programmer, was selected from a pool of four alternates by lottery. The newly configured panel of six men and six women was ordered to start over. "You are instructed to disregard and put out of your mind all past deliberations and begin deliberating anew," Fujisaki said.

The new panel has nine whites, one Hispanic, one Asian-American and one Jamaican-born man who said he is of black and Asian parentage. The criminal jury that acquitted Simpson had nine African-American members.

"This is another strange development in a case filled with strange developments," said Erwin Chemerinsky, a University of Southern California law professor who has been following the trial. Chemerinsky said it is too soon to know what the significance of the juror's dismissal will be.

Simpson, who was acquitted of the double murders of Ronald Lyle Goldman and Nicole Brown Simpson, is being sued in civil court for wrongful death by the families of the victims, who are seeking financial damages.

On Tuesday last week, hours before the jury received its instructions, the judge learned that at least two jurors received at their homes letters that included a pitch for the services of agent Bud Stewart in any post-verdict deals struck with tabloids, television and publishers.



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Justice on Trial at Genocide Tribunals

Stephen Buckley in Kigali

THE DAY Frodouard Karamira's trial was to begin, the steamy courtroom — built for 100 people — was stuffed with twice that many. Karamira, a businessman accused of taking a leading role in Rwanda's 1994 genocide, had gotten a defense attorney just three days earlier. Four other suspects scheduled for trial that day had no lawyers.

The three magistrates, thrust into the genocide trials after only a few months' training, held court for nearly four hours, then decided to postpone the proceedings.

Nearly 500 miles to the east, in Arusha, Tanzania, the U.N. International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda also is holding genocide trials. Defense attorneys are prepared. Fans cool the courtroom. Spectators watch from a spacious gallery. The three judges, seasoned professionals from foreign nations, move the proceedings along swiftly.

Yet beneath the surface, the U.N.-run trials are suffused with tensions that spring from allegations that include nepotism, cronyism and mismanagement of resources.

As Rwanda tries to foster reconciliation in a country bitterly divided by ethnic slaughter and civil war, concerns are being raised that the cause of justice has gotten off to a sputtering start both in the government-run trials in Kigali and other Rwandan cities and in the U.N. tribunal in Arusha.

"This meets our standards for a kangaroo court," a senior Western diplomat said of the Rwandan proceedings.

The trials are meant to bring to justice people who allegedly took part in a campaign waged by the Hutu ethnic group, which accounts for about 85 percent of Rwanda's population, to exterminate the Tutsi minority. Beginning in April 1994, Hutu extremists in the army and civilian militias killed more than a half-million Tutsis, along with Hutus deemed enemies of the Hutu-led government.

A Tutsi-led rebel group seized power in July 1994 and halted the slaughter soon afterward. With that, more than 1.5 million Hutus fled to neighboring countries. An estimated 1 million of them have flooded back into the country from Zaire and Tanzania in the past two months.

Now, with most of the refugees back in the country and the reconciliation process begun in earnest, some human rights observers and diplomats say the trials in Rwanda, for which some 90,000 suspects are being held, may fail because of disorganization and lack of resources. Others express fear that corruption and dissension have poisoned the U.N. proceedings, which have indicted a handful of men suspected of organizing the 1994 massacres.

"Justice is not the only ingredient necessary for reconciliation," said John Keys, country director of the International Rescue Committee. "But it's absolutely key."

One casualty of the violence in 1994 was Rwanda's justice system. Many magistrates and law enforcement officials were either killed or fled as refugees. The Rwandan government, with the help of major donor countries such as the United States and the Netherlands and groups such as the International Rescue Committee, has scrambled to rebuild the system. It reconstructed courts. It resupplied offices with photocopiers, printers, pens, paper. It recruited magistrates, who received four months' training.

But even those strides have not brought the system back to normal. Its work force buckles under the 90,000-prisoner caseload, as about 150 prosecution investigators struggle with some 600 cases each.

The overwhelming caseload has made the government reluctant to postpone trials, even though virtually all of the suspects lack defense attorneys. Trials began on December 30 and so far at least eight defendants have been sentenced to death.

In the Kibungo prison in southeastern Rwanda, Deogratias Bizimana, 38, and Egide Gatanazi, 43, the first two defendants sentenced to death, have appealed. Both are accused of inciting and participating in the massacre of hundreds of Tutsis in Kibungo in 1994.

Standing outside a dark, cramped 3-by-6-foot cell that he and Gatanazi share, Bizimana, a former physician's assistant, held a sheet of paper on which he had scribbled his list of reasons for appeal.

"We appeared without lawyers, that's the first reason," said Bizimana, a stocky man whose wide eyes frequently flash with nervous energy. "I tried to convince them to allow me to get a lawyer, but they would not."

Human rights activists and diplomats have blasted the proceedings. "The trials will lack credibility if things don't change," said Alison DesForges, of Human Rights Watch/Africa, who has studied Rwanda for three decades. "Serious prosecution appears not to be a top priority for this government."

Gerald Gahima, Rwanda's deputy justice minister, acknowledged that the trials thus far "could be better conducted. . . . The magistrates are new to their job. They're not sure what to do."

But Gahima added that critics are holding Rwanda to an unfair standard. He said the trials are being conducted under the same system the country used before 1994. Then, trials frequently proceeded without defense attorneys because only 3 percent of defendants could afford them, Gahima said.

Today, there are about 200 lawyers in Rwanda, but only 16 practicing. Of those 16, most have refused to represent genocide suspects.

"The standard is both unrealistic and unfair," Keys said. "To level these complaints against Rwanda doesn't take into account the demands placed upon a very poor country."

The U.N. International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, meanwhile, is far from poor. Established 18 months ago, it has indicted 21 people. The first suspect — Jean-Paul Akayesu, a former mayor in Rwanda — went on trial on January 9 after several postponements.

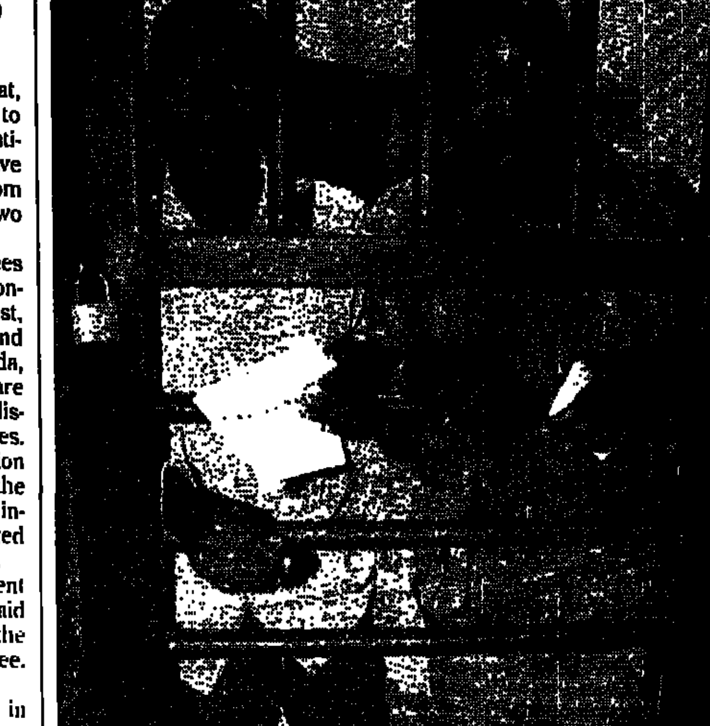
An air of cool professionalism pervades the proceedings in Arusha. Bottles of mineral water are scattered throughout the courtroom, and interpreters provide almost simultaneous translations. The tribunal has a $36 million budget.

One of the principal stumbling blocks facing the Arusha tribunal — the fact that few of those indicted are in custody — was greatly diminished last month when Cameroon handed over four former Rwandan Hutu officials suspected of masterminding the mass slaughter. Yet a torrent of controversy and criticism has jolted the tribunal, prompting at least three investigations into its actions in recent months.

Some staff members charge that the tribunal's administrators have run it so poorly that they have delayed the pace of indictments and nearly paralyzed the work of investigators. Others, Europeans and Americans in particular, have accused African officials of using nepotism and cronyism to freeze them out of positions.

The tribunal's headquarters is in Arusha, but its main offices and investigative operations are in Kigali, Rwanda's capital. Tribunal officials here fume, accusing Arusha of denying them resources. Until recently, the Kigali office had only 30 investigators. Today there are 66 investigators, but only 14 working vehicles. Critics of both the Rwandan government and the tribunal emphasize that failed justice will mean long-term instability for Rwanda. Hutus must be convinced that they did not return to a country where the legal system is rigged against them; Tutsis must be persuaded that the tribunal is serious about avenging the deaths of their families and friends.

"The stakes are very high," said Christopher Hurd, head of African Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "If justice is not done, people will take the law into their own hands."


Deogratias Bizimana, right, and Egide Gatanazi are appealing against their death sentences PHOTOGRAPH: SAYYID AZIM

Mexico Rediscovers Its Fiery Spirit

John Ward Anderson in Tequila

ONCE a key component of barroom brawls in spaghetti westerns and monumental hangovers of American youths, the firewater that took its name from this small town just west of Guadalajara is now the preferred drink in Mexico's most exclusive restaurants and drawing rooms.

Those who think Mexicans have a hereditary fondness for tequila or are constitutionally better equipped to handle it will be surprised to learn that, in fact, many Mexicans have long shunned the drink of revolutionary heroes and legendary hangovers. For more than a decade, far more tequila has flowed north of the Rio Grande than south of it.

But now, thanks to better production methods, glitzy marketing gimmicks and its booming popularity abroad, Mexicans are renewing a long-lost love affair with their national drink. Longer aging in oak barrels, stringent quality controls and packaging in fancy bottles have spawned a new breed of "designer" tequilas that are — dare it be said? — smooth and even silky.

"There was a time when tequila was a cheap product — drunk only by the lower classes when they had a fight with their sweetheart, downed a bottle of tequila and got drunk listening to sad music," said Dionisio E. Baquedano, a top executive at Casa Pedro Domecq, which makes Sauza, the most popular brand of tequila in Mexico.

"But it has become more refined, he continued. "And now people drink it before lunch or dinner in the highest-class restaurants."

Young, upwardly mobile Mexicans in particular have adopted top-shelf tequilas as their own, pushing sales of the most expensive brands up 85 percent last year despite the country's lingering economic recession.

Last year, Mexicans drank an estimated 15.3 million gallons of tequila, up a whopping 51 percent from 1995. The country is on the verge of overtaking the United States as the world's leading tequila consumer.

But seriously, you say, how highbrow can tequila really get?

At Mexico City's Agave Azul restaurant, named after the lily plant from which tequila is made, a 1.5-ounce glass of Herradura Seleccion Suprema costs about $22.50. Or enthusiasts can take home the whole bottle for $370.

Mexicans don't "shoot" or "slam" these prestige tequilas, and generally don't mix them. Befitting their new-found snob appeal, they are savored straight in fancy glasses that enhance their color and bouquet, and they are sipped accompanied by a slice of lime (never lemon) and a small glass of sangrita, a spicy concoction that looks and tastes like a Bloody Mary without the alcohol.

"Tequila used to be a drink of poor campesinos, but then all the foreigners started to drink it and the Mexicans followed the trend," said Francisco Lopez, manager of Agave Azul, which has a seven-page menu offering 79 brands of tequila.

It is more than simply a fad and marketing phenomenon, said Jose Antonio Garcia, general manager of El Madrono, a Mexico City liquor store that sells more than 230 types of tequila in bottles of all shapes, sizes and colors.

"Today, people don't want cheap tequila," he explained. "If it's cheap, they say it's bad. So the producers are changing their processes to create better tequilas that are in all respects richer, with darker colors, bigger bouquets and smoother tastes — like a whiskey or a cognac."

Ironically, the booming popularity of this most Mexican of liquors — first used in a rugged form hundreds of years ago by Aztecs in religious rituals, then refined by the Spanish through distillation — began outside Mexico. And it owes perhaps its greatest debt to an Austrian entrepreneur who came up with a slick marketing gimmick — putting a tiny cactus inside a clear bottle of tequila and charging as much as $100 a bottle.

Mexican tequila producers have disdain for this brand, called Porfidio, noting that the maker doesn't actually produce the tequila, but buys it from other companies. Nonetheless, Mexicans begrudgingly credit the company for seeing the huge potential of expensive, well-marketed tequila. As rich Mexicans started sampling better tequilas abroad than at home, they returned to Mexico and demanded higher quality tequila. And producers began copying Porfidio's upscale marketing and pricing tactics.

Thus, a tequila craze was born.

"There's a huge growth in the foreign market for tequila, but in 1996, the growth in Mexican sales was really, really big — 35 percent," said Carlos Camarena about the Tapatio tequila company started by his family 60 years ago. "Everybody wants to give a bottle of tequila as a gift to a friend because it's very prestigious. This is our future."

ILLUSTRATION: JEAN FRANCOIS ALLAUX

Divided by American Dreams

Jane S. Jaquette

THE PAN-AMERICAN DREAM
By Lawrence E. Harrison
Basic Books. 310pp. $25

WHEN I was a graduate student in the '60s, studying Southeast Asia and Latin America, among the most influential theories were David McClelland's that modernization requires mothers to raise children motivated by "need-achievement," and F.X. Sutton's distinction between backward traditional societies ("particularistic, communal, and ascriptive") and their modern betters ("universalistic, individualistic and achievement-oriented").

Lawrence Harrison's new book, The Pan-American Dream, returns to this genre to argue that Latin Americans are "50 years behind" the United States and Canada, and to ask whether they will ever catch up. Harrison is a veteran of decades of experience in the region, working for the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) in five countries, including Nicaragua.

In Harrison's view, the unprogressive "Ibero-Catholic" culture of Latin America was reinforced by the "defensive nationalism" of Latin American economic and foreign policies, which were in vogue until the collapse of communism in 1989 ended a rather different dream: that Latin America might have a socialist future. As the Confucian/Tao ethic can explain East Asian prosperity, Harrison maintains, "Anglo-Protestant" values of "future, work, frugality, education, merit, and community" explain the economic success of North Americans. The lack of those qualities, including the absence of a strong ethical sense, according to Harrison, explains Latin American failures. He adds that the theory that underdevelopment was mainly due to U.S. imperialism and Latin American "dependence" have created a self-image of victimization among Latin Americans.

The "dream" of Harrison's title is the Partnership for Development and Prosperity, the successor to the Enterprise for the Americas initiative announced by President Bush in 1990 and endorsed by President Clinton in December 1994. Harrison believes that the Partnership is destined for failure if the cultural causes of underdevelopment are not addressed. He does not deal with another obvious source of potential failure — the lack of sustained follow-up in Washington.

Harrison's analysis is inconsistent, overwhelmingly anecdotal and ultimately unsatisfying. Latin American underdevelopment cannot be attributed to only one cause, cultural or otherwise, because it is overdetermined: by its colonial history, by its 19th-century caudillos and its 20th-century authoritarian leaders; by the lessons learned from the Depression (which fed the economic nationalism Harrison deplores); and by the profound disparities between rich and poor, landowner and peasant, European and indigenous — conditions not shared by Harrison's contemporary East Asian examples.

Harrison fails to link his analysis of culture to his critique of misguided economic policies, which, he tells us, were products of intellectual hubris and Marxist and dependency "nonsense," not Ibero-Catholic values. Far from presenting an argument for cultural causality, Harrison stirs the pot of triumphalism and cultural xenophobia, citing the few studies that agree with his views, and ignoring many others that do not. There is nothing Pan-American about this dream.

Lovers and Other Strangers

Michael Mewshaw

GUIDED TOURS OF HELL
By Francine Prose
Metropolitan. 241pp. $23

MOST PEOPLE profess to enjoy travel. Few confess to the crime of tourism. Like racism or anti-Semitism, that's something others do. Francine Prose has a fine appreciation of this paradox, and in Guided Tours Of Hell, a pair of novellas, she shows how yesterday's tragedies have become today's comedies.

In the title story, an American playwright named Landau fetches up in Prague at the First International Kafka Congress. As the participants make a pilgrimage to a Nazi death camp, Prose suggests her theme in a single sentence: "Tiny nips of transcendence nibble at his line, but given even the gentlest tug, they slip back into the water, the oily shoals of boredom, ego and resentment, and let's be honest, fury at Jiri Krakauer, that *terrible poet and memoirist* whose only claim to fame is that he survived two years in the camp, where he somehow conducted a love affair with Kafka's sister Ottla."

A failure at everything from art to infidelity, Landau resents Jiri Krakauer's sexual magnetism, not to mention his penchant for appropriating the experiences of other Holocaust survivors. While the situation is rich in irony, Prose doesn't allow the characters much room for development after their early annihilating introductions.

When Landau accuses Krakauer of lying about the death camp, the memoirist seems to suffer a heart attack, and Landau runs away.

The novella unfortunately has the defects it sought to dramatize. An account of people unsure how to respond to the Holocaust, it's written by an author who appears to share this uncertainty.

The second novella, "Three Pigs in Five Days," is much longer yet also denser, more stylish and successful. Although it addresses some of the same issues, it does so in a language that coaxes the characters complicatedly alive with a few deft strokes. Nina, a writer, works for her lover, Leo, who owns a magazine, Allo, that allows them both to take theme tours to France. On the first trip, they tumble from bed to bed in a series of hotels where the famous and infamous have slept. But then Leo sends Nina to Paris alone to do a piece about "the small new hotels and secret bistros of Montparnasse."

Desolated, she assumes he's ditched her — an assumption that makes sense when the hotel where he reserves her a room proves to be a former bordello, now owned by Leo's ex-mistress. After Madame describes her affair with Leo, Nina wanders around the City of Light, lonely as a rain cloud, ruing all that she fears has ended.

When Leo shows up and claims he always meant to join her in Paris, Nina's grateful, but feels "less like a woman talking to her lover than like a bewildered juror assigned to a case so contradictory that it bordered on the metaphysical."

But despite Leo, she continues to believe in "the existence of love beyond reason, beyond the reach of time's sharp blade."

Northern Exposures

Dennis Drabelle

INDEPENDENT PEOPLE: An Epic
By Halldor Laxness
Translated from the Icelandic
by J.A. Thompson
Vintage. 482pp. Paperback. $14

THIS NEW edition of Halldor Laxness's great novel — the first in English since 1946 — arrives with a sheaf of encomia. Brad Leithauser, who has contributed an introduction, calls it "the book of [his] life." E. Annie Proulx rates it among her "Top Ten Favorite Books of All Time," and Jane Smiley calls it "one of the best books of the twentieth century." The fanfare is enhanced by the author's longevity and reputation — he was born in 1902, is still living in Iceland and won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1955.

I'm happy to join the chorus. Independent People has virtually everything a novel can offer: a skillfully evoked setting, characters who imbed themselves in your consciousness, passion and scope, narrative brio, and a translation that can be enjoyed as a model of English prose. It may not be the book of my life or yours — that's a matter of taste and temperament. But it is certainly artful and engrossing.

Its protagonist, Bjartur of Summerhouses (his "croft" or small farm), is the independent chap to whom the title mainly refers: cussedly independent, at times irrationally so — but his excesses can be forgiven because his lot is so arduous and his achievement so hard-won. Also, he is a poet, a proud upholder of the Nordic saga tradition. While others daydream during long hours of sheep-tending and farm management, he fashions and memorizes verses. So keen is his appetite for poetry that he becomes odd man out at a prosaic funeral: The mourners "stood with bowed heads, all except Bjartur, who would never dream of bowing his head for an unrhymed prayer."

Having toiled as a farmhand for 18 years, as the story opens (at roughly the turn of the century) Bjartur has just bought Summerhouses and stocked it with a herd of sheep. Now his task is to hang onto his assets, in the face of the harsh Icelandic climate, the vagaries of the wool market, and the reputed presence of a demon of old, Kolumkilli, who comes with the croft like a blot on the title.

The same strength that's helped get Bjartur where he is makes him hell to live with. His wives tend to die young. His children do the same — or, if they survive, clear out as soon as they can. A notable exception is Asta Sollilja, who may not be his daughter at all (there are rumors, which Bjartur credits or ignores to suit his current mood, that a local nabob had his way with Bjartur's wife just before their marriage) but whom he loves with as much fervor as his stolid heart can muster.

Their relationship begins to change, however, after the pair travels to Reykjavik, the Icelandic metropolis. Sleeping in the same bed to economize, they have a near-escape from incest, which leaves the daughter plagued by guilt and the father mired in inexpressible anxiety. When Asta Sollilja becomes pregnant by a houseguest, Bjartur renounces his paternity and banishes her from the croft. He hears of her from time to time — she is living in poverty not far away — but tries to stick to his course. The novel's underlying questions are whether Bjartur can keep his farm and whether, with his formidable pigheadedness, he will reject such opportunities to reconcile with Asta Sollilja as fate throws their way.

The father and daughter are impressive characters, but Laxness is perhaps even more skilled at sketching his supporting players, such as the regional rich lady, whose paeans to the Icelandic peasantry reach Pecksniffian levels of sanctimoniousness; Bjartur's reckless son Gvendur, who misses the ship on which he is to sail to America because of a dalliance with a pretty girl and who then finds that the impetus to emigrate has deserted him; Asta Sollilja's ancient grandmother, whose emotions are as creaky and out of use as her joints but whose unfazed mutterings inject humor into the family's every catastrophe; and the local bailiff, who would not blink if accused of murder, "but with one crime he would not have his name connected: if anyone insinuated that he was making money, the ice was broken and his tongue was loosened; such a slander was more than he could stand."

EVEN filtered through translation, Laxness is a brilliant writer. He can capture an elusive truth in a short span of words: "Some days seem strangely idiotic when one looks about one: they appear to be incapable of answering anything, whereas other days are intelligent and can provide the answer to everything." And, especially in describing landscape and the weather, he can rise to stemwinding eloquence: "It started raining, very innocently at first, but the sky was packed tight with cloud and gradually the drops grew bigger and heavier, until it was autumn's dismal rain that was falling — rain that seemed to fill the entire world with its leaden beat, rain suggestive in its dreariness of everlasting waterfalls between the planets, rain that thatched the heavens with drabness and brooded oppressively over the whole countryside like a disease, strong in the power of its flat, unvarying monotony, its smothering heaviness, its cold, unrelenting cruelty."

It seems typical of Bjartur, whose work keeps him outside most of the day, that he has come to terms with the infernal rain: "'It's nothing but damned eccentricity to want to be dry,' he would say. 'I've been wet more than half my life and never been a whit the worse for it.'"

About midway through the novel, Laxness introduces the cooperative movement: Many of Bjartur's neighbors are banding together to provide their own capital and supplies and thus circumvent the local merchants and bankers, who are accused of taking excessive profits. The coop proves to be no panacea, and Laxness's refusal to join it turns out to be not as shortsighted as one might have expected.

There have been years — recent ones, in fact — when the Nobel Prize has gone to a little-known writer who emerged from obscurity only to fall quickly back into it. Halldor Laxness, happily, is a different case: a major writer from a small country whose work might have been lost to outsiders had it not been for the Nobel judges. It's good to have him back.

Sue Wheat reports on the evangelical zeal behind this week's World Microcredit Summit in Washington

Banking on a better future

IN 1974, Professor Mohammad Yunus, a Bangladeshi economist from Chittagong university, lent the equivalent of $30 to 42 basket weavers to help them purchase bamboo. The interest rate was higher than the banks, but lower than the money-lenders. "I saw how the Bangladeshi people suffered and how the money they earned went straight into the pockets of money lenders and I realised there must be something terribly wrong with the economics that I was teaching," he said.

Against the advice of banks and government, Yunus carried on giving out "micro" loans, and in 1983 formed the Grameen Bank, meaning "village bank". It now has 1.8 million poor borrowers in 22,000 out of 68,000 villages in Bangladesh and lends $30 million every month.

Other institutions quickly followed worldwide, including the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (Brac), Bank Rakyat Indonesia Unit Desa, Accion in Latin America, and K-Rep in Kenya. Thousands of smaller micro-finance institutions (MFIs) are run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), often as a part of a broader aid programme.

Oureye Fall, of Keur Madaro village in Senegal, is a typical borrower. A $38 loan from the NGO, Maison Familiales Rurales, means Oureye can buy mangoes without having to pay extortionate interest rates to her landowner. At the end of last season, she repaid her loan with interest, made $85 profit, and bought a mattress and new clothes for her children. "For the first time I was able to afford this luxury," she says.

Fall is not alone. The World Bank now estimates that MFIs reach some 16 million people in developing countries and have a total portfolio of $2.5 billion, with massive growth potential. Loan repayment rates are extraordinarily successful — frequently reaching 98 per cent. The poor have proved they are indeed bankable, despite having no collateral.

Success is often put down to the "solidarity group" of five or six borrowers, which meets regularly. As default by any one member must be carried by the group, peer support and pressure keep repayments high. Savings are also crucial, both for domestic expenditures — such as funerals and food shortages — and to provide a capital base for the loan fund.

Most MFIs focus on women, and with women accounting for more than 900 million of the world's 1.3 billion absolute poor (defined as living on less than $1 a day), and being excluded from conventional banking services more than men, the need for female-focused poverty alleviation schemes is unarguable. As MFIs also often provide literacy, health care and business training, as well as an opportunity for women to meet together, being part of a group can be extremely liberating. Becoming financially independent also increases women's self-confidence and status in the household and community.

In many ways, micro-finance is a donor's dream. As women have proved to be better repayers than men, "empowerment" and financial efficiency go hand-in-hand. Combine this with the 1990s free-market, individualistic philosophy, and it is obvious why this week's World Microcredit Summit in Washington has become so politically attractive.

"It's a sort of micro-finance evangelism," says James Copestake, lecturer in development economics at the University of Bath. "The idea that we can reconcile the new right political thinking of being commercially tougher by providing aid to small businesses, and help the poor at the same time, is like a magical way of breaking though an age old problem." Results International workers, who are organising the summit, do seem to be on an almost spiritual mission.

But Ben Rogaly, former policy adviser at Oxfam, warns: "The hard-sell, micro-finance evangelism approach could run risks, such as diverting aid away from much-needed primary care programmes." He and others also warn that as donors such as the World Bank's Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest, whose 23 member donors are jointly allocating more than $200 million to micro-finance, insist that MFIs be financially sustainable and far-reaching, programmes are beginning to bypass the poorest and focus on the middle poor.

Counting on support . . . the women of Subiki village in Bangladesh at a regular meeting of the Grameen Bank PHOTOGRAPH: GIL MOTI

Clare Short, Britain's shadow minister for overseas development, is scornful of such reactions. "We have so much evidence that micro-finance schemes work," she says. "There's nothing in the world that doesn't have some problems somewhere, so why pour cold water on something that is so obviously good?"

But women's empowerment is complex. Anne Marie Goetz, of the Institute of Development Studies in Britain, and Rina Sen Gupta, from Bangladesh, point out that 63 per cent of the Bangladeshi women they questioned had partial, very limited or no control over their loans, passing the money over to their husbands — sometimes by choice, sometimes by force.

Virtually all multilateral and bilateral donors are taking a cautiously positive approach, and commercial banks are being lured in — although the ethics of the North's banks again profiting from the hard work of the poor is questionable.

But the jury is still out on whether the summit's goal of reaching 100 million poor families by 2005 through raising $26 billion is attainable, and if it would necessarily be a good thing if it was. Market saturation is one hindrance — there is, after all, a limit to the number of egg sellers, dress makers and basket weavers a community can absorb.

Despite the cautionary tales, confidence in micro-finance as a poverty alleviation strategy is high. Compared with the devastating effects of the green revolution or of misplaced aid, even the critics are hopeful.

Microfinance, by Susan Johnson and Ben Rogaly, is published by Oxfam and ActionAid, +44 (0)1865-311311

Bonn snubs single currency hopefuls

Ian Traynor in Bonn

GERMANY wants to prevent some European Union countries joining the single currency in two years' time, even if they meet entrance terms this year, a key Bonn official signalled last week.

In remarks likely to ignite controversy outside Germany, Jürgen Stark, the number two at the finance ministry, indicated that "paper" qualifications would not necessarily gain some countries membership to what Germany would prefer to be a small core of countries kicking off the single currency in 1999.

"The markets have overdone expectations that a large number of countries can qualify. We have to make sure that these countries also stand for stability," Mr Stark told a conference of German media bosses.

"There are member states that qualify on paper. But they would be well-advised to . . . respect that they should not have to follow the rigid rules of the European central bank from the start."

Italy and Spain, both desperate to join European Monetary Union, were seen as the two countries relegated to Mr Stark's waiting list.

But Germany's own fitness to join the euro club was thrown into fresh doubt as the government's 1997 economic projections highlighted the widening gulf between Bonn's determined political rhetoric on the single currency and the reality of Germany's wretched economic performance.

The annual report on economic prospects predicted a budget deficit this year of 2.9 per cent of gross domestic product, well up on the 2.5 per cent forecast as recently as November by the finance minister, Theo Waigel. The new figure puts Germany just inside the single currency ceiling of 3 per cent that must be achieved this year to qualify for EMU.

Independent analysts and bankers say that even the revised figure of 2.9 per cent is over-optimistic and that Germany will fail to pass the EMU test. The country is struggling to cope with record post-war unemployment, which could hit 4.5 million this month, and the cabinet's forecast of 2.5 per cent growth this year is also viewed as too rosy.

If, as expected, the 1997 jobless rate exceeds the government forecast of 4.1 million, falling tax receipts and increased spending will wreck the cabinet calculations.

John Palmer in Brussels adds: **Some EU countries aiming to join the single currency could be disqualified as their economic performance will be judged on the basis of inaccurate figures for inflation and output.**

Eurostat — the official statistics arm of the European Commission — will report later this month that it has evidence that official figures exaggerate inflation. "We expect the report to reach similar conclusions to studies in the US that, because of the impact, not least, of information technology, inflation is far lower than appears to be the case," a commission official said this week.

In Brief

THE US economy surged in the final three months of last year, making 1996 the second best year for growth since the late 1980s. Inflation fell to the lowest level in three decades. More than 2 million new jobs were also created, taking unemployment down to 5.3 per cent.

RICHARD LINES, the former MTM chemicals mogul who rubbed shoulders with senior Conservatives and talked of having been a member of the élite Special Boat Service, has begun a two-year jail sentence following conviction for fraudulently inflating his company's worth by $400 million.

IRELAND will outstrip Britain in the prosperity stakes next year, according to data from the Westminster Parliament's economics research division, with Irish income per head $9 higher than its near neighbour. Britain is currently 16th in the league of economic success, behind such countries as Iceland, Austria, Australia and Sweden.

TOYOTA president Hiroshi Okuda threw a timebomb into the European single currency debate by issuing a threat to Britain that failure to join could see its multi-million dollar investments switched to the Continent. But he later said a commitment to EMU would be only one factor in any investment decision.

ELIZABETH FORSYTH, former aide to Asil Nadir who was convicted of handling stolen money, was freed by the Appeal Court in London after a judge said her five-year sentence had been "disproportionately" long.

PORSCHE'S prolonged sickness was pronounced over when it disclosed tripling of profits — from DM10.3 million ($6 million) to DM36 million — in the first six months of 1996.

FRAUD is costing the UK insurance industry more than $1 billion a year, despite the high-profile fight against crime launched three years ago, according to a Datamonitor study.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates February 3	Sterling rates January 27
Australia	2.1015-2.1041	2.1040-2.1066
Austria	18.62-18.64	18.69-18.71
Belgium	54.58-54.68	54.77-54.84
Canada	2.1646-2.1667	2.1829-2.1851
Denmark	10.09-10.10	10.13-10.14
France	8.94-8.95	8.95-8.96
Germany	2.6467-2.6495	2.6573-2.6599
Hong Kong	12.48-12.49	12.56-12.57
Ireland	1.0103-1.0122	1.0134-1.0153
Italy	2,614-2,617	2,588-2,590
Japan	196.15-196.40	193.63-193.91
Netherlands	2.9732-2.9765	2.9847-2.9882
New Zealand	2.3394-2.3426	2.3539-2.3570
Norway	10.47-10.48	10.53-10.54
Portugal	266.04-266.69	265.46-265.78
Spain	225.03-225.25	223.68-223.87
Sweden	11.74-11.76	11.76-11.77
Switzerland	2.2885-2.2919	2.2951-2.2980
USA	1.6114-1.6124	1.6230-1.6240
ECU	1.3690-1.3705	1.3699-1.3713

FTSE100 Share index up 45.6 at 4287.8. FTSE 250 index down 19.6 at 4573.7. Gold down $9.95 at $344.00.

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Botswana	L Mathematics Education	W45542
Botswana	Assistant Librarians	W45543
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Botswana	L Foundation & Comparative Physical Education	W45552
Botswana	L Law	W45553
Botswana	Computer Services Manager	W45581
Swaziland	AP/SL/L Geography, Environmental Science & Planning	W45560
Swaziland	AP/SL/L Chemistry	W45561
Swaziland	Computer Centre Manager	W45562
Swaziland	P/AP Agricultural Education & Extension	W45563
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Swaziland	SL/L Law	W45567
Swaziland	SL/L Curiculum Studies in Commerce	W45568
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West Indies (Trinidad)	P/SL Electrical Energy Systems	W45572
West Indies (Trinidad)	P/SL Telecommunication Systems	W45573
West Indies (Trinidad)	L/AL Industrial Engineering	W45574
West Indies (Trinidad)	L/AL Mechanical Engineering	W45575
West Indies (Trinidad)	SL/L Human Anatomy	W45576
West Indies (Trinidad)	L/AL Biostatistics	W45577
West Indies (Trinidad)	L/AL Measurement and Evaluation	W45578
West Indies (Trinidad)	L/AL Chemical Pathology	W45579
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Abbreviations: P - Professor; R - Reader; AP - Associate Professor; SL - Senior Lecturer; L - Lecturer; AL - Assistant Lecturer; PDF - Postdoctoral Fellow

For further details of any of the above staff vacancies please contact the Appointments Department, ACU, 36 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PF, UK (internat. tel. +44 171 813 3024 [24 hour answerphone]; fax +44 171 813 3055; e-mail: appts@acu.ac.uk), quoting reference number of post(s). Details will be sent by airmail/first class post. A sample copy of the publication *Appointments in Commonwealth Universities*, including subscription details, is available from the same source.

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Happy reunion . . . Animal is greeted by fellow activist John after five days underground PHOTO: MARC HILL

The scum also rises

John Vidal salutes the road activists who took their protest underground

LAST WEEK the Daily Mail was offering £3,000 to anyone who would tell them about "Animal", the 16-year-old Colchester girl who spent five days in the Fairmile tunnels to try to slow the A30 ripping through some of Britain's most beautiful acres.

No one was tempted to tell tales, but when she came blinking into the Devon sunlight and the arms of the law, Animal refused to talk to the tabloid newspapers, which have consistently labelled road protesters as scum.

Poor Daily Mail. Poor Michael Howard. Those he has successfully criminalised for damaging blades of grass, whom he wants to put on the same legal level as hijackers and manslaughterers, and whom he is even now bugging and spying on as if terrorists, are being revealed as rather peaceful, happy and balanced people who still have a few ideals about country, land and justice.

Even worse for the politicians: Animal's parents, good Middle England, totally support her. Rather than digging up vermin under the Fairmile oaks, the state has found truffles. The metaphor is clear. We are driving our best critics underground, in all senses.

Instead of trying to suppress such activity, could not politicians be magnanimous enough to celebrate such endeavour? What has barely been noticed in five years of road protests is that, for all their often shambolic exterior, they are a first-class finishing school for people wanting to do citizen service.

Significantly, the politicians — barring Tony Benn — have shied away, barely acknowledging their existence except to vilify them. Is it any wonder the tunnellers and tree-climbers find nothing attractive in mainstream party politics?

Besides, as youth training, the road protests could hardly be bettered. Here is a genuine cadet force run without leaders, on a shoestring budget, where the coin is self-respect, self-discipline, hard work, initiative training, leadership and wit. Not all, it must be said, pass with honours. But if you want to see care in the community actually working, then the road-protest camps are models.

The camps, too, have proved successful job-training exercises. Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and other blue-chip environment groups may be establishment and middle-aged now, but they mostly have a radical past. Just as the peace movement and Greenham Common threw up extraordinary people vilified for their commitment at the time, so British protest today is throwing up tomorrow's leaders, and many are working for groups that the Government subsidises.

As Animal was chilling out after her underground protest, the formidable Lovelee was minding her. Their priorities were clear. "What she needs after that ordeal," says Lovelee, "is a damn good party."

Indeed we do.

Self-help guide to writing a bestseller

Francine Stock

CLIVE, you've been my agent for 20 years. I'm sorry you're reluctant to take on the metaphysical thriller. Clearly you don't think Renaissance Lucca is what a publisher needs right now.

But I do see what you mean about self-help books. There they are — rows of them, screaming with gold and silver and red type. Maybe I should give it a go, after all.

First off, I'd need the title — and I won't make it snappy. *Prima assoluta* amongst the psychology scribes is clearly Susan Jeffers. Her Feel The Fear And Do It Anyway, published six years ago, is still at number four in the psychology league table. But the big one has to be the gender gazetteer Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus by the other John Gray (not, sadly, the Guardian-contributing politics don). That sold 31,000 copies in the final weeks of last year.

So Don't Get Down, Get On Up could be in there with them. I've looked carefully at the style and structure. Typeface is very important. Imagine an eight-year-old let loose on all the fonts Windows 95 can offer. Size does matter, too. Go upper case, go bold to bang home the most banal message. I AM ENOUGH! Let Go Of The Little Things! Never let a chapter go more than a page or so without subheadings. Balance problems ("Nobody loves me") with solutions ("I experience love wherever I go").

Content is more tricky. The authors spend many of their copious exclamation marks apologising for the lack of it. "Yes, it is that simple!" "That's all there is to it!" Broadly the formula is this: admit just what a mess you are in, then suspend judgment on yourself and others. Love yourself a lot (verbally, that is) and be congratulated for having done so well with such a shitty deal.

Long gone are the days of John Cleese and Robin Skynner jokily dipping our toes into the scary waters of family dynamics and therapy.

One of the longest-running successes is Louise Hay, whose How To Heal Your Life has been on the bestseller lists since the early eighties. She believes "we create every so-called 'illness' in our body". Like her, I've had cancer — a regular qualification for writing one of these books. But unlike her, I don't believe that the cancer was caused exclusively by deep resentment.

There's a new orthodoxy growing, and I don't buy it. In order to put forward the thesis that you can cure yourself, you have to believe you got yourself into the mess in the first place. It's a theory of such blinkered egotism that at its worst promotes a kind of mind and body *Ubermensch*. This is just the kind of arrogance for which conventional medicine is regularly criticised. Recognise your pain or you die.

What kind of help is this? Bad karma alone did not get me and millions of others into cancer wards. I will not be made to feel guilty for my illness. Admittedly, only the extremists take that approach. Most of these books have one, simple, common-sense observation — what your aunt might tell you over a dram — spun into a vacuous candyfloss. Our new terror is other people. Religion fades, natural disasters no longer terrify. "We are now alone with each other." Perhaps the unique selling point of these titles is that you're not alone in being alone.

So I'm drafting proposals for The Alien Across The Breakfast Table — How To Crystallise Better Loving. Or how about updating Dante — a man goes on a journey and finds nine spiritual insights into living? We could call it Celestine Prophecy. Then again, somebody already did. And made millions.

Suffer the children

Catherine Bennett feels a wave of nausea coming on at the current obsession with fertility

FOR the sensitive, one of the more wounding sights of recent days has been the spectacle of the Sewell family of Pucklechurch, in Avon, which proudly assembled itself for inspection on the arrival of Mrs Sewell's 15th child, Rachel. "I always said I'd have six children," said Mrs Sewell, aged 45, "but once we married they kept coming at a rate of about one every 18 months." Of course, there are ways in which this localised population explosion could have been avoided, but no such insinuation was allowed to spoil the prospect of the Sewells' enduring and untrammelled fecundity.

On this happy occasion even the normally severe Daily Mail was prepared to gloss over the couple's obvious difficulties in supporting their enormous brood on an income of £220 a week — "some bills have to take priority over others". Indeed, you could only conclude, from the celebratory tone of this good-news story, that Britain would be a better place if more people had 15 children, instead of the measly one or two which is the most the average woman is now able, or willing, to produce. More and more women — with a stubbornness which perplexes and infuriates many commentators — refuse to produce any children whatsoever. These blighted refuseniks, these callous egg-trashers are regularly reminded that they will live to regret their selfishness.

A similar, pro-propagation evangelism informs the incessant fertility stories that now take up so much space in British newspapers. Some, such as the tales of child-bearing grandmas and runaway surrogates, of multiple births and plummeting sperm counts, are really fertility freakshows; others make their point by illustrating, over and over, the suffering of couples who cannot have children. Sitting in vacant nurseries, or bleak parks, they describe their repeated attempts at IVF, their abandoned hopes of adoption, their regrets that they had not met earlier, or started "trying" sooner. No resolution ever seems to be achieved. The misery of the childless is a story in itself.

Compare this with the joyful reporting of any advance in fertility treatment, however expensive or remote, improbable or unconvincing. Last month the headline "Men with no sperm count to become fathers" made front-page news, despite being based on the cases of two prospective fathers at one private London clinic. "I would say it could help tens of thousands of people," said a director of this establishment. It was added that the procedure would cost "no more than £600".

This is excellent news, but it seems worth remembering that the sperms thus retrieved at bargain prices, would then be used in IVF, which has a success rate of 14.1 per cent per cycle, costs around £2,500 and subjects the would-be mother to protracted drug treatments and invasive operations which will, in all likelihood, turn out to have been futile. Any customer who has gone near the glossy, thriving fertility industry will be aware that its profits, in contrast to those made by most businesses, are built on failure. No wonder private clinics are so keen to thrill the public with the latest pioneering treatments.

It's true that these stories are news, science is continually opening up new possibilities, and therefore moral dilemmas that had not been dreamed of in our parents' day. But they also express a conviction that the more babies the better; the fewer, the sadder.

Choosing whether or not to have children, whether to bring another being to this great stage of fools, is a serious and private decision. But it is now not left to be that. The widespread assumption is that parenthood is so attractive and prestigious that any chance of child-bearing, however minuscule, must be seized by everybody. Possibly because sophisticated Western women now spend most of their reproductive years trying not to get pregnant, they feel virtuously distinguished when they do.

Producing a child seems to be all that matters — no matter how it is cared for or brought up afterwards. That fallen City star, the weird Nicola Horlick, rarely seen without a recently breast-fed infant sprawled about her person, is considered a "supermum", queen of the multipares, for having produced the five little Horlicks, confirming that quantity of mothering is still considered more important than quality.

For parents, the obsessive attention now lavished on reproductive medicine is guaranteed to make them feel they have joined the beatified and can look down with satisfaction on the damned. Perhaps it is something not far off schadenfreude that explains the proliferation of baby stories, just as it supports the inexhaustible stream of true-life medical dramas on television. Only the healthy can relish the spectacle of the sick; only the childed, the offsprung, can take a complacent pleasure in stories of frustrated child-bearing. For those who have come to define themselves as infertile, these reports are, obviously, agonising.

THE media craze for progeny is ludicrously conceited. Are British babies so much more desirable than the foreign variety? In our vanity, we lecture Third World women on their duty to contraceive, while congratulating our very own Sewells and Horlicks for choosing the opposite course. But prosperous babies do just as much damage to the world about them, or more. As Joy Williams writes in her essay The Case Against Babies, published in the latest Granta: "The US population is growing faster than that of 18 other industrialised nations and, in terms of energy consumption, when an American couple stops spawning at two babies, it's the same as an average East Indian couple stopping at 66, or an Ethiopian couple drawing the line at 1,000." In this overcrowded island, babies grow up to take up one of the things we can least afford: space. Even if the population begins to level, new social mores decree that its members will demand more individual room than ever before.

In the circumstances, we seem, with the utmost perversity, to be congratulating the wrong people. If nothing can compensate some couples for their childlessness, it would surely make life easier if people without children were no longer pitied so ostentatiously, but regarded as models of civic responsibility.

ILLUSTRATION: ANN HOBDAY

Swan synchronicity

Mark Cocker

TECHNICALLY the panorama visible from the hides at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust reserve at Welney in Norfolk was completely without colour. Overhead there was the dead white of total cloud cover. Below it was the even, lifeless white of snow and ice-covered meadows. Even most of the birds which by late afternoon had begun to congregate in hundreds, then thousands, were themselves also white.

However, this slightly overstates their uniformity, since wild swans are never just a single colour. These huge creatures — amongst the world's heaviest flying birds — combine a subtle range of tones, from the rich yellow-white of double cream to the immaculate purged white of a seagull's breast. As they powered overhead or surged down on to Welney's flooded meadows, their legs descending like an aircraft's undercarriage at the moment of landing, these whooper and Bewick's swans transformed the silent view into a hectic and powerful spectacle.

Not that the location itself is without its inherent drama. Welney lies on the two great rectilinear drains that were carved through the region in the 17th century. Running north-south for almost 40km and known as the Hundred Foot Washes, the dykes helped convert the East Anglian Fens, once one of Europe's largest wetlands, into some of the most productive agricultural land in Britain. Today, it is an absolutely flat sea of black peat soil, whose emptiness is its most singular feature. Ironically, all that remains of the older, more diverse landscape is the area closest to the drains themselves, and it is almost 400 hectares of these flood meadows that form the reserve at Welney.

The wild swans are not its only inhabitants (wintering ducks, for instance, are often present in greater numbers), but they are its most famous and principal attraction. And this is something the Trust has worked hard to establish. From an original population of just a few hundred, it has slowly built up swan numbers to around 4,000-6,000 every winter — the largest single gathering in all Europe. To encourage their loyalty to the site they are fed dietary supplements such as potatoes and grain. During bad weather, areas of water are kept free of ice and to add to the spectacle produced at their regular feeding times, the swans are illuminated by floodlights each evening.

The impact of these feeding sessions is extraordinary. When the spadefuls of grain are scattered on the water, the formerly loose aggregates of swans and other wildfowl cohere into a solid block of white. The impression is not so much of a multitude of individuals contending with one another, as of a single organism functioning in unison, or of an abstract design composed of sinuous necks and orange or yellow beaks, whose colours are enhanced by the artificial lighting.

I know of no other conservation organisation in Britain which has more successfully directed its wildlife assets to produce this level of natural theatre. It has about it an element of contrivance and of artifice, which suggests the hidden hand of Welney's creator, the late Sir Peter Scott, one of the foremost British wildlife artists this century.

Wilderness purists, loyal to a vision of nature where man's presence has been largely eliminated, would probably blench at this level of conscious manipulation and at such commercialism — especially the loudspeaker commentaries interpreting the visual feast for the audience — but few could deny the power of the Welney display. Fewer still could miss its underlying message that nature is both important and enriching and warrants our deepest commitment.

Chess Leonard Barden

HASTINGS 1997 was looking most promising from the British players' perspective a round or two from the finish, but it eventually ended in disappointment. Nunn and Hebden seemed to have the Premier sewn up between them, but were then caught by the Lithuanian Rozentalis; Plaskett led most of the way in the Challengers, yet the Latvian Rausis won first prize; and 12-year-old Luke McShane, just when he seemed assured of another IM norm, missed out by half a point.

The flu bug initiated some odd results, notably top-seeded Adams's recovery from 0/3 through three draws to three wins at the finish. The real British success, however, was Hebden, despite his last-round defeat. The Leicester GM is formidable on the Leigh weekend circuit, but this was his best international result.

Here, in Hebden v Nunn, his unpretentious opening soon takes a grip on the game. White gangs up pieces and pawns on the weak dark squares until Black sheds pawns in a vain bid for activity. Even at the end, White's f6 queen and f4 rook combine or mate on h4 — all dark squares — while Hebden's total move count is light 10, dark 28.

The paradox is that the King's Indian Defence, where Nunn is a world expert, aims at active black counterplay on these same dark squares.

Hebden v Nunn

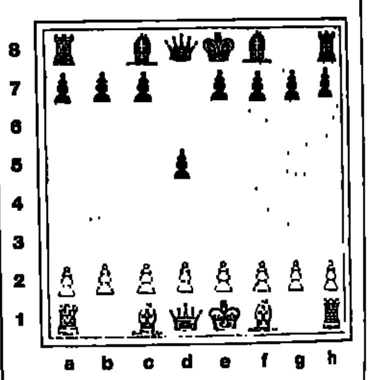
1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 Bf4 Bg7 5 e3 0-0 6 Be2 c5 7 Ne5 Nc6 8 0-0 cxd4 9 exd4 Qb6 10 Nxc6 bxc6 11 Na4 Qa5 12 c3 Nd7 13 b4 Qd8 14 Qd2 e5 15 Bh6 Bxh6 16 Qxh6 Re8 17 Rfe1 Rb8 18 dxe5 Rxe5 19 Qd2 a5 20 Bf1 axb4 21 cxb4 Qf6 22 Rxe5 Nxe5 23 Re1 Kg7 24 Nc5 Bf5 25 a3 d4 26 f4 Nd7 27 Nxd7 Bxd7 28 Re5 c5 29 Rxc5 Bf5 30 Rd5 d3 31 Bxd3 Qa1+ 32 Bf1 Qxa3 33 Qd4+ f6 34 Rd6 Qxb4 35 Qxf6+ Kh6 36 h3 Qxf4 37 Rd4 Qe3+ 38 Kh2 Resigns.

Ex-world woman champion Xie Jun — the first Chinese player to compete at Hastings — began in style with two fine wins, but in Conquest v Xie she was unable to fathom the occidental mysteries of the Tromp 2 Bg5 and White's subsequent tactics. Towards the end of the game, 25 . . . Nxd3 loses to 26 Qe7, 26 . . . Nxd3 to 27 Qc6, while after 27 Qxd4! Rxd4 allows 28 Re8 mate, and 27 . . . R7e8 fails to 28 Qc3 Nxd3 29 Qc6 Nc5 30 Rxc5.

Conquest v Xie Jun

1 d4 Nf6 2 Bg5 Ne4 3 Bf4 d5 4 e3 Bf5 5 f3 Nf6 6 e4 e6 7 Nc3 c6 8 g4 Bg6 9 h4 h6 10 Qb3 b6 11 Nh3 dxe4 12 Bxe4 Nd5 13 0-0-0 Bd6 14 Bxd6 Qxd6 15 e4 Nxc3 16 Qxc3 Nd7 17 h5 Bh7 18 Kb1 0-0-0 19 Ka1 Kb8 20 Nf2 f6 21 Ba6 c5 22 Qa3 Qg3 23 Rhf1 cxd4 24 Nd3 Ne5 25 Rc1 Rhe8 26 Qa4 Re7 27 Qxd4 Red7 28 Qc3 Resigns.

No 2458



All four knights have disappeared from the board. This week, there are two puzzles: (a) can you recreate the five-move game which reached this position? (b) place a black N on b8 and a white N on b1, and reach the new position by a four-move game.

No 2457: 1 Nxe6 Ne4(if Ne4+ 2 Rxe4 dxe4 3 Ne7) 2 Ne7 Nxe3 3 g7! (not 3 Kxe3 Rh3+ and Rg3) Na4+ 4 Kb3 Ra8 5 g8Q Rxg8 6 Nxg8 b5 7 Ne7 Nb6 8 Kb4 Ka6 9 Ne5 and White's d pawn will win.

Quick crossword no. 352

Across
1 Send into retirement (3,3,2,5)
8 Firing mechanism (7)
9 One of two giants (5)
10 Cook in oven (4)
11 Quality hotel or petrol (4-4)
13 Speak indistinctly (6)
14 Paper size (6)
17 Result of wild stroke at golf (4,4)
19 Enthusiast — polish! (4)
21 Play (5)
22 Pastoral country (7)
24 Where the compass points (8,5)

Down
1 Gentle approving blow (3)
2 Dense shrubland (7)
3 Impulse (4)
4 Large flatfish (6)
5 Cheap and shoddy (8)
6 Anything (archaic) (5)
7 Sweet lump — Rio mountain (6,4)
10 Bureaucratic self-importance (9)
12 Sheet-like tissue etc (8)
15 Apart (as below!) (7)
16 Opposite of acid (6)
18 Vulgar parlance (5)
20 Survey (4)
23 Tree (3)

Last week's solution

A	W	A	Y	■	A	S	B	E	S	T	O	S
N	■	L	■	S	■	C	■	T	■	O	■	A
T	R	I	P	P	E	R	■	H	A	R	E	M
E	■	B	■	I	■	A	■	E	■	M	■	E
L	A	I	R	D	■	P	O	R	T	E	R	■
O	■	■	■	E	■	M	■	■	■	N	■	F
P	R	A	I	R	I	E	O	Y	S	T	E	R
E	■	R	■	■	■	R	■	E	■	■	■	I
■	C	R	I	T	I	C	■	A	M	P	L	E
C	■	I	■	U	■	H	■	R	■	O	■	N
H	A	V	E	N	■	A	L	L	O	W	E	D
E	■	A	■	I	■	N	■	Y	■	E	■	L
F	E	L	I	C	I	T	Y	■	P	R	A	Y

Bridge Zia Mahmood

HOW are you on opening leads? I find them a bit like the British weather: a great deal of rain with the occasional sunny period. I'm not alone in this. Just about every expert will tell you that the opening lead is the most dangerous and difficult part of the game. Contracts that could be defeated are allowed to make because of a poor opening lead more often than for any other reason.

This is understandable, of course. Once the dreaded opening lead is out of the way, the defenders can use the information provided by the sight of dummy and one another's signals to conduct the defence. But when all you have to go on is some aggressive and uninformative bidding from your opponents, finding the right card at trick one can be difficult indeed.

To see if you're in form, try this problem. Your hand is:

♠J65 ♥4 ♦108642 ♣K873

and the bidding has been:

South	West You	North	East
1♥	No	3♥	No
6♥	No	No	No

What do you lead? A great many experts would choose an opening club lead.

Benito Garozzo, one of the greatest players who ever lived, once said that "against small slams, you must attack", by which he meant that you should not be afraid to lead from unsupported honours.

When the opponents contract for a slam, they'll usually have plenty of tricks if you defend passively, so an aggressive lead from a king or a queen is often the successful action. But if you follow the Italian superstar's advice on this hand, you will regret it, for the deal is:

North
♠Q 10 7 3
♥K 6 5 3 2
♦Q 5
♣9 4

West
♠J 6 5
♥4
♦10 8 6 4 2
♣K 8 7 3

East
♠K 9 8 4 2
♥9 7
♦A K J 3
♣6 5

South
♠A
♥A Q J 10 8
♦9 7
♣A Q J 10 2

As you can see, any lead but a club leaves declarer with no chance for his contract. A diamond will kill the slam at once, while a heart or a spade will give declarer momentary hope until the club finesse fails.

This doesn't mean that Garozzo's advice was wrong. In general, when the opponents bid to a small slam, your side is likely to have one chance to gain the lead following trick one.

You should therefore try to find a lead that will establish a second winner for you when you get in with the first one. But when a player who opens with a one bid jumps to slam after a limit raise from partner, he almost always has an extremely distributional hand and will often hold a strong two-suiter, so you should try to avoid leading his second suit.

On this deal, that suit is more likely to be clubs than any other, since you have greater length in diamonds than clubs and, if declarer's second suit were spades, he might have opened 1♠ instead of 1♥.

If you chose a club lead, bad luck — but if it's any consolation, so did I! ©

Home comforts from the age of steam

A *RARE* Victorian railway carriage that has lain concealed inside a Devon bungalow for more than 50 years could be restored to its former glory following a planning application to demolish the building around it, *writes Geoffrey Gibbs*.

In the heyday of the Great Western Railway the comfortable private-hire saloon would have carried clubs and families on excursions to the seaside. But for most of this century it has been stationary and hidden — serving as the lounge of Kozie Kott in the village of Cove, near Tiverton.

Patrick Barter, a steam railway enthusiast, believes it is one of only a handful of its type still in existence and is excited by the good condition it is in, having been protected from the elements for many years. It was one of about 50 produced by the GWR works in Swindon.

The carriage was moved to its present position 100 metres from the old Exe Valley railway line in 1941 by the grandfather of the present owner, Ken Kerslake, a retired teacher from Taunton. He said that because of building difficulties at the height of the war his grandfather had placed the carriage in a field and built around it to produce a home.

Although he had received permission to demolish the building they had no plans to do so while their existing tenants, Ken Beale (pictured) and his wife, Bridget, were living there.

PHOTOGRAPH: ROBIN PRICE

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

***HANNIBAL* of Carthage crossed the Alps with his elephants. Where did he get them, and how were they trained? The African elephant today is regarded as untrainable.**

THE Carthagians regularly used the North African forest elephant for war, a breed now extinct. It was much smaller than its bush elephant cousins, on average about 2.5m at the shoulder. There is, however, evidence from coins that they also imported Indian elephants.

Hannibal apparently took 37 elephants with him to Italy from Spain. Most died en route, and perhaps a dozen survived to fight in his first major Italian battle, the Trebia, in 218 BC. A larger number was brought to Italy by his brother Hasdrubal a few years later, but he and his army were defeated by the Romans before they could link up with Hannibal. — *Jonathan Drake, Clapham, London*

IT IS a widespread fallacy that African elephants are untrainable. The largest working group in Africa, to my knowledge at least, was in the then Belgian Congo earlier this century. They were used to move wood and other articles. In its prime, the herd numbered more than 100. In Zimbabwe there is a herd of around five animals that are being trained to carry game scouts during anti-poaching operations. — *Graeme Cumming, Oxford*

***IS A* man's bladder larger or smaller than that of a woman?**

AT THIS very moment, mine is smaller. The answer would also vary with other circumstances — size, age, fluid intake, bladder habits, renal function, anatomic variation, and health. The bladder can expand quite incredibly in various situations. But I doubt that anyone has been sadistic enough to line up recruits and inflate their bladders for such comparisons. — *Professor Philip Hall, Winnipeg, Canada*

***WHAT* is the origin of "kick the bucket"?**

MOST etymologists agree that the "bucket" refers to a kind of yoke that was used to hold pigs by their heels so that they could be slaughtered, and was particularly used in parts of Norfolk. The subsequent death-throe spasms of the unfortunate animals created the impression that they were "kicking the bucket". The derivation is either from Old French *buquet* — "a balance" — or the fact that the raising of the yoke on a pulley resembled a bucket being lifted from a well. The term is known to date from at least the 16th century.

The more interesting (and probably apochryphal) origin relates to suicides who would stand on a bucket with a noose around their neck and at the chosen moment would kick away the bucket. — *Andy Parkin, Moortown, Leeds*

MANY modern American English words — most notably "jazz" and "OK" — owe their origins to African languages, dialects and word formations. Originally popularised by black-face minstrels, "Kick the bucket" comes, via *kickeraboo* (dead), from the West African Ga words *kekre* (stiff) and *bo* (to end up), and also the Sierra Leone Creole *Krio kekerabu* (dead). — *Tony Aitman, Black Voices, Liverpool*

***IS THERE* more justice or injustice in the world?**

ACCORDING to Zen Buddhism, there is equally half of one and half of the other. Most people assume that if, for example, evil could somehow be eradicated from the world only good would remain. But this is impossible. If evil were to disappear, good would also necessarily cease to exist. That distinctions such as justice and injustice arise from human perception and do not essentially exist is an objective of Zen. — *Daigaku Rummé, Fukui, Japan*

Any answers?

IF ALL* the cars in Britain were converted to run on electricity, how many more power stations would be needed to cope with the extra demand? — *Paul Hibbert, Nottingham

WHAT* is the effect on political theory if a democratic socialist party becomes more rightwing than a liberal democratic party? — *Ian Broadbridge, Ashford, Kent

ARE* there any names that I am not allowed to use if I want to change my name by deed poll? Could I, for instance, call myself Coca-Cola or Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second? — *Steve Hibbert, Shepherds Bush, London

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Best Ever Notes & Queries is now available, price £8.99

Letter from Singapore Phoebe McLeod

A bus with a view

WHEN I get on the bus it is already full. I have to jostle to get to the ticket machine to push my plastic card into the slot for my fare to be deducted. I scrabble to catch the flimsy ticket that shoots out with my card — there have been inspectors on the bus recently and somewhere above my head is a notice informing me of the punishments for those who eat, drink or litter on the bus. I don't even want to discover what the fine is for travelling without a ticket.

The street is still quiet, with only a few elderly men setting up tables in front of their small shops, neatly pegging magazines one by one to a line stretched between the wooden joists which support the balconies of the old shop houses, or arranging today's loaves of sliced white bread in a wire rack behind one of the pillars, out of the sun. Labourers in vests, shorts or dhotis and flip-flops leave the food stalls carrying tiny plastic bags of milky coffee to drink later. A maid hurries down a side-street towards the kindergarten with a little Chinese boy in a lilac sailor-suit. An elderly gap-toothed trishaw driver strains alongside the bus, his sinewy arms and legs tanned the dark brown of his battered hat. An old Chinese lady in a grey floral samfu sits behind him, surrounded by bags of shopping from the local market. Sunshine glints off the little altars outside the shops, a few satsumas on each one. Two men wearing black Malay hats and immaculate white shirts stand chatting by the roadside, on their way to or from the mosque.

As the bus continues towards the city, shophouses abruptly give way to white villas, and then high-rise public housing estates. An Indian family struggle on to the bus, and it is the American tourist who offers his seat to the father carrying the baby, and then, ashamed, his Chinese neighbour gives hers to the mother and the little girl. The family are dressed in their best, the children's hair gleaming with oil, going into the city for the festival.

We pass shining marble-fronted tower-blocks, huge concrete and glass complexes of offices, hotels and boutiques. The old white colonial buildings are dwarfed by their angular neighbours. Some of the roadside trees have a scattering of bright yellow flowers, others are shedding their leaves. Every available space beside the road is a lush green of shrubs and plants.

From the bus I see a brightly coloured procession — women in fabulously coloured saris and men in gorgeously bright shirts. Among them are strange shapes of bobbing feathers. It is the annual Hindu festival of Thaipusam, honouring Lord Subrahmanya and Ganesh, the sons of Shiva. These are the devotees slowly walking from the Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple to the Chettiar Hindu Temple wearing their chosen *kavadi* (burdens) of spikes in their bodies. Some balance steel arches above their heads, decorated with an array of plumes or peacock feathers.

Metal spikes are hooked into their chests, backs and even faces. Enthusiastic friends are clapping and chanting to encourage them, willing them to make it. From this distance it all looks strange and wonderful, but I imagine the pain and effort and find myself flinching. A buzz of conversation has broken out on the bus as we all strain to look. My fellow passengers tut and mutter at the spectacle.

THE BUS halts outside a flashy building which has just shed its Christmas display of enormous doves for a rash of sprays of baby-pink plastic blossom. All the window displays in Singapore have turned red: lanterns, banners, imitation fire-crackers, and even Mickey and Minnie hang outside the smaller shops dressed Chinese-style. The larger stores have replaced their Christmas trees with sprays of pink flowers. Santa has been transformed into the God of Prosperity. There is also the occasional giant-size goofy cow, because Chinese New Year this month heralds the Year of the Ox. My personal favourite features two yellow cattle standing on their hindlegs and kissing. She wears a mini-skirt, just like most of the women milling past her.

Some stores have green banners and flags decorated in delicate golden Arabic calligraphy: the end of Ramadan is in February too. Muslims will be celebrating Hari Raya Puasa while their Chinese neighbours toast the Lunar New Year. The green decorations seem understated in the face of the strident red, orange and pink window displays. Even an oncoming bus flashes: "Gong Xi Fa Cai" (I wish you lots of money) on its LCD display.

It's time for me to elbow my way off the bus into the heat and get to work.

A Country Diary

W B Osmun

THE COTTAGE we rent on Lake Huron's Manitoulin Island is quintessentially Canadian. Built by a Finn after the war, it is constructed of the land: spindly pine trees and massive slabs of fossilised limestone. We love it there. So does the local fauna. In previous years we have shared with deer, mice, squirrels and snakes. One ruffed grouse was so eager to get in he came through the window, breaking his neck in the process. This year it was a little brown bat.

Bats are enjoying a renaissance in public opinion. Naturalists reassure us that bats are unlikely to be rabid, are clean and eat their weight in mosquitoes daily. Furthermore, contrary to myths, they do not entangle themselves in human hair and, at least in the north, do not suck blood. Newspaper articles encourage us to build bat houses, rectangular boxes with no bottoms. All of which makes it very difficult to react in horror just because a bat has decided he likes your accommodation as much as you do.

Our bat would appear each evening to fly a few laps around the room before disappearing through a crack in the ceiling above our bed. "He'll keep the mosquitoes down," Anita reasoned. But, I knew it was a mouse with wings, and if I wasn't afraid of mice, I need not fear bats. I am, after all, a rational man. Nevertheless when our winged friend took a tour I could not stop the *frissons* crawling up and down my spine.

Worlds in collision

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

IT WASN'T long ago that Ken Loach seemed an almost forgotten film-maker, at least as far as the big screen was concerned. Now, thanks at least partly to friendly critics and admiring festival juries, he is able to make a film each year.

Carla's Song is his sixth of the nineties — two of which (Riff-Raff and Land And Freedom) were voted European Film of the Year. It still isn't easy to be an overtly political film-maker in Britain, even one with Loach's skill, humour and compassion.

Carla's Song has all these attributes, even if it is not his most successful blend of them. Set first in Glasgow and then in Nicaragua at the time of the Sandinistas' last stand against the Contras, it starts as Loach's first love story and ends as one of his most polemical statements. Unfortunately, the latter in the end drowns out the former and the film becomes a lesser one because of it.

Robert Carlyle, one of Scotland's best actors and a screen natural — as Trainspotting, Riff-Raff and Go Now showed — plays a bolshie bus driver who meets a Nicaraguan refugee (Oyanka Cabezas). He falls for her and finally journeys back with her to her war-riven homeland.

The initial love story is both amusing and affecting. The bus driver is determined to chase the girl, even though she is hesitant to get involved. She has a cause to consider, and he hasn't the faintest idea what he is getting into.

In Nicaragua, he (and we) find out. He befriends an American (Scott Glenn) fighting with the socialist Sandinistas, and sees the havoc and cruelty the conflict produces, learning at first hand about the terrible history of the Central American world.

The film gives us evidence that is pretty indisputable. But in its second half it loses its highly personal centre and threatens to become the kind of emotional diatribe that bludgeons watchers into acceptance.

What the film clearly intends is a lest-we-forget drama in which the apolitical bus driver becomes a representative of those of us unaware of the Nicaraguan conflict and its depressing aftermath. But its analysis seems too weighted to be other than a little simplistic. The Contras may have been racketeers for American capitalism and the Nicaraguan middle classes. But the present government did, after all, win the elections, and they also allowed Loach to make his film.

The best part of it is in Glasgow, where Loach exhibits an amazing grace in detailing, with humour and point, a relationship between two totally different people — one of whom comes from a world pushed into a chaos almost beyond the other's comprehension.

Carla's Song thereafter becomes an angry film, and understandably so. But, strangely, the angrier it gets, the less effective it becomes.



Love in the time of war . . . Oyanka Cabezas in Carla's Song

No nudes is bad news

A*N INDIAN* film festival is like no other. Because India is the only country whose annual film festival moves from centre to centre each year, the bureaucrats have to travel with it, hoping that the locals, often from a totally different culture, will prove co-operative, *writes Derek Malcolm*.

There are, however, two venues where they know that audiences will at least be knowledgeable and appreciative — Calcutta in Bengal, where the great Satyajit Ray lived, and Trivandrum in beautiful Kerala. They are the only two states in India to have been run by communists, and in both film has long been regarded as an important part of culture.

This year, in the muggy heat of a non-existent winter — Trivandrum has been renamed Thiruvananthapuram to avoid association with its imperial past — huge crowds saw one of the best programmes mounted in recent memory, including an excellent Asian section and a much appreciated retrospective of Krzysztof Kiéslowski, the Polish director who died last year.

But, as usual, there was controversy. It chiefly concerned the Indian Panorama, designed to show off the best of what is called the Parallel Cinema — which signifies art rather than Bollywood mainstream.

The Panorama excluded Mira Nair's Kama Sutra, even in its cut version for Indian consumption (no frontal nudity). It also omitted the new films of several other notable directors such as Mrinal Sen, Govind Nihalani and Aparna Sen. It was difficult to see how they could have been any less disappointing than most of those shown.

The best of the Panorama proved to be Adoor Gopalakrishnan's Kathapurushan (Man Of The Story), a carefully structured view of Keralan politics through the eyes of a writer whose life progresses through an almost feudal order into the era of Marxism. But the film that caused the greatest controversy was Deepa Mehta's Fire, the story of two married women who, neglected by their husbands, engage in a passionate relationship. Despite the mini-riots outside the cinema as crowds tried to get in, Fire handles the sexuality in a determinedly tactful way. But when Shabana Azmi, one of India's leading stars, and newcomer Nandita Das at last exchange a passionate kiss, some cinemagoers felt that the degeneracy of the West had finally reached the subcontinent.

In Trivandrum, however, film is treated with maximum seriousness. Neil Jordan's Michael Collins, which opened the festival, was generally condemned as "just another Hollywood film". But the public voted the Iranian Gabbeh as its most popular film — a tribute to its discernment since the film, though beautiful, has little obvious narrative and has been restricted to small art houses in the West. But it would have been fascinating to see what audiences thought of Kama Sutra, nudity or not.

Listening to the silence of Schubert

Flashy is not a word you'd use to describe András Schiff, says **Paul Fisher**. But that suits him fine

ANDRAS WHO? ask classical cloth-ears who could put surnames to Nigel, Luciano, José, Kiri or Sir Simon. András Schiff is a buff's pianist, whose quality is summed up by a Gramophone magazine critic who reckons him "among the most gifted and mercurial musicians of our time".

Schiff's billing as star player and director of a six-hour concert at London's Wigmore Hall to celebrate Schubert's 200th birthday guaranteed a sell-out before Christmas. And he'll pack them in for another Schubertathon when he plays the sonatas from February 5-22.

Born in Hungary in 1951, Schiff can earn over $8,000 a performance, and half the year travelling the global concert circuit pays for flats in London and Florence, plus New Year jaunts up the Nile. "I'm glad I've built a certain following," he says. "To me it's enough. I'm not against selling millions of records but won't reach out for the people who buy Nigel Kennedy."

Why?

"I despise that kind of thing."

Why?

"Because it's very bad music."

I first saw him playing very *good* music at the final recording session of Beethoven's piano concertos with Bernard Haitink conducting the Dresden Staatskappele. At the end, the orchestra tapped their bows on the music stands, a muted professionals' tribute rarer than the simulated ecstasy of an average audience. "I treat recording as performance in an empty hall," Schiff said later. True. Without a score he'd played entire movements with passion and precision and the resulting CDs, out next autumn, will be the record of intense performances unmediated by intrusive producers.

Schiff is the man most likely to replace Murray Perahia as post-millennial piano superstar and yet Decca let him go because praise, talent and packed halls don't necessarily translate into CD sales. Teldec, a German classical label now owned by Time Warner, signed him knowing he'll resist all attempts at image building. They've taken on a personality problem they define in negatives. "You want me to describe him?" said a Teldec exec. "He's not an outreach artist. He's not flashy."

Schiff echoed the word. "Flashy personalities like the Three Tenors have moved musical interpretation in a bad direction. Today it's not enough for the big public that somebody makes beautiful music.

They want an image?

"I think an image is your personality, your choice of repertoire and the way you approach music. The trouble starts when record companies want to make your image for you. If you are not very firm in your ideas, you let them make it, and that's dangerous."

A way of avoiding the danger is playing hard to get. The Schubert anniversary, an obvious hook to jolly up CD sales, had Teldec paying for me and another journalist to fly to Germany. But Schiff would only talk Beethoven. We learned he has a life plan and has waited until his early forties to record Beethoven's concertos and needs another decade before he's ready to record the sonatas. He praised the Dresden orchestra for drawing on a centuries-old tradition and being a local band. And that was that. Tomorrow was Amsterdam, then Brussels and Zurich, so we flew our separate ways, and it took a minuet of phone calls between agent and Teldec PRs to arrange a face-to-face interview.

His looks are a cross between a Rembrandt self-portrait and John McEnroe minus the snarl. Over lunch he was devoid of performer-pomp and ignored the closed-shop conventions of interviews by naming villainous names: Kennedy and the Three Tenors; "cheap literature and silly books . . . over-engineered recordings".

HE DESPISES authentic instrument CDs as "carefully tailored products" dependent on technology and editing. "The recordings don't resemble a live performance, and most of the things they play they never do in concert. They sight-read them in the studio, and I oppose that. A recording must be a document of when you have reached a phase in your life. You don't have the right to record a piece sight-reading in the studio. It's not serious."

Serious praise belongs to such dead heroes as Furtwängler and Busch, and he started by loading religious significance on three composers at the centre of the classical canon. "I would call Bach the father, Mozart the son and Schubert the holy spirit." He got stuck straight into Schubert, calling him "the most human, vulnerable and modest" of his holy trinity and seemed to take it personally that this "grand-scale composer" had only one public concert in his life. "He was not an extroverted composer. His works are not outgoing. As a listener you have to put yourself in a receptive mood of tranquillity and put yourself on his wavelength." Like Schubert, like Schiff.

Schiff, indifferent to the big public, prefers the refined little crowds that populate the Wigmore Hall. "The Wigmore is ideal for intimate music-making. Restless audiences kill Schubert's music, which is mostly about silence and tranquillity.

"Of all the music I know, Schubert's moves me to tears. Schubert said there is no such thing as happy music and while his music is infinitely sad and tragic, it does not depress me. It lifts me up . . . A concert is not an entertainment. It should be a deep, emotional and intellectual experience from which the listener takes something home to feel and to think about.

"I don't think Schubert wanted to be particularly original," Schiff says. "Today it's one of the main criteria for an artist. You cannot be deliberately original. You have to be true and honest to yourself. You cannot be deliberately different." Schiff is different in his indifference to the publicity game. To hell with shifting product if the price is showmanship.

Schiff sees his work as inching along a tradition he defines as conservative and hierarchical. "Performers are second-class citizens to composers," he says. "They're important citizens because the music will not be listened to without us. To me a musical masterpiece has a number of possibilities of approach, and there is a certain frame in which performers have liberty to move around. It's like the law in life. If there is anarchy, then chaos breaks out."

And would he say the star system is a kind of anarchy?

"Most certainly. Yes."

East meets West

Simon Hattenstone meets his old buddy, the Salford playwright Ayub Khan-Din

IMAGINE you'd been at school with the class loser. The one with the horrid nicknames, the one who'd do anything to get out of games, lose his kit, feign meningitis and hide behind a tree on cross-country runs. And then, 20 years later, you discovered he'd turned into a football star like Alan Shearer.

I feel as if I've made a similar discovery about Ayub Khan-Din. So does he. His first play, East Is East, premiered at London's Royal Court last November, has transferred to Stratford East. The play examines the fraught relationship between a stoic white English mum and alienated, despotic Pakistani dad, their six children and fish and chip shop. It is set in Salford in the early 1970s, a time when those who didn't conform to the Anglo-Saxon norm were defined by their difference. So I'd call Ayub Paki and he'd call me Jew. We didn't think it was racist, we thought it was compulsory.

It's a funny, brutal and moving play. Ayub says his characters are slightly grotesque and talks of heightened realism, a term used by another Salfordian, Mike Leigh. Through exaggerating the ridiculous (his dad's pidgin English, the kitsch wallpaper), he exposes the wounds and misunderstandings of day-to-day life.

It's almost 20 years since I first met Ayub. He'd just blagged his way on to an A level drama course at Salford Tech. Ayub left school with one O level (a CSE1 in Art, actually) and a couple of grade three CSEs — a poor record even by Salford standards. The course director told him he had to audition. Ayub asked what an audition was. The director explained it was a couple of readings, one of them Shakespeare. He'd heard of Shakespeare but never read him, so he went to the library, took out a collected works, and opted for the first decent speech — the epilogue from Henry V. When he told his family he was going to be an actor, his father threw a no-son-of-mine strop and his mum and nine brothers and sisters laughed themselves silly.

East Is East shows how the family fitted into neither English nor Pakistani society. Sajit doesn't communicate, has kept his foreskin a secret from his orthodox Muslim father and buries himself inside a fetid parka because it protects him from the outside world. More than anything it is about the betrayal of his father's unrealistic expectations. Five of the six kids reject Islam for pop music and Western teen culture. Worst of all, the unseen brother turns his back on the chippie to become a "bloody pansy" hairdresser.

In reality, all 10 children turned away from arranged marriages and Islam, and four became hairdressers. His eldest brother became a star and cajoled Pierre Alexander, coiffeur to Manchester's rich and pampered, to give Ayub a job. Ayub was an awful hairdresser, he had neither the scissor technique nor the bedside manner. Ayub already knew his hairdressing days were numbered when he happened across David Niven's autobiography, The Moon's A Balloon. He started reading — a rare event. It was an amazing story. One minute Niven is bored and restless in the army, the next he decides to be an actor. Here was a role model.

Of course, Ayub failed the exams at Salford Tech. But he was so taken with acting he applied to drama school a year early and won a place. At Mountview he met the well-heeled and round-vowelled and his accent underwent an identity crisis. For a while he sounded as if his mouth was stuffed with marshmallows and his acting suffered. Soon, the accent calmed down and he began getting work.

First with the Asian theatre group Tara Arts, then he was invited to audition for the lead in Stephen Frears's My Beautiful Laundrette — strangely enough, playing a Pakistani hairdresser. In the end, he was given a small part, although he didn't realise how small at the time. Frears apologised profusely after the edit when his one line was cut. Still the film, written by Hanif Kureishi, was terrific; we discovered Daniel Day-Lewis and felt ever so proud when Ayub stood at the top of the stairs, mouth akimbo, shouting down in three glorious seconds of celebrity silence.

A year later he was invited round to Frears's for another chat, this time for the lead in the film Sammy And Rosie Get Laid. For a while Ayub became our passport to vicarious fame. Unfortunately, the film was a disaster and is best remembered for a scene of ambidextrous ingenuity in which Ayub sniffed cocaine, ate a McDonald's and Mars Bar while masturbating over the evening telly.

Race has been a constant in Ayub's career. He says he is still denied many roles because he is black (by name more than colour). When he auditioned for Tara Arts after leaving drama college he plastered himself in foundation because he worried he wasn't black enough.

He first started writing East Is East at college. For years, he'd leave it in a bottom drawer and sporadically return to it for another decision and revision. All the time he continued acting, for television. Last year, Tamasha Theatre Company asked him if he still had the play because the Royal Court was planning an Asian writer's workshop. And that was that.

Now the play — the first debut to sell out at the Royal Court — is being turned into a film. He is even being held up as a spokesman for the Asian community. The new Hanif Kureishi? "Just because we both happen to be Anglo-Pakistani, people class us together. But we have different experiences. Hanif's father worked at the embassy, my Dad worked in a fucking chippy in Salford." The new Orton then? "I quite like that one . . . I've got rid of all the hammers at home, though."

Ayub talks with incredulity about the letter he received from a searingly eloquent woman who told him he was betraying the Asian community by portraying his father in a bad light. "Well, actually it happened, my Dad was like that and I understood why he was like that. I just write from my experience and am not interested in what people *want* me to say."

He says that you have to telescope lives in a play and, actually, he remembers his parents' good times more than the bad times. We talk about how his mother died of Alzheimer's in her fifties, how his father returned alone to his family in Pakistan to die, how his brothers and sisters found it hilarious that he'd written a play, how they all came to see it in Salford and loved it, and how strange it is that there's only one hairdresser left in the family.

Ayub Khan-Din, ex-class reject and imperfect hairdresser, now Royal Court playwright PHOTO: MARTIN GODWIN

From the exalted to the commonplace

OPERA
Andrew Clements

THE highlight of the Royal Opera's 50th birthday season is the new production of Hans Pfitzner's Palestrina. In many ways they've done the work proud — it was spaciously conducted by Christian Thielemann with a huge cast, led by Thomas Moser in the title role, that is as fine as one could wish for. But the real interest at Covent Garden was the chance to hear the work itself, performed in Britain for the first time by a fully professional company 80 years after its premiere in Munich.

This four-and-a-half-hour "musical legend" is by no means the towering masterpiece claimed by some, but its flaws are fascinating. In Germany the work has almost sacred status, accorded the same kind of respect and reverence as Wagner's Parsifal or Mastersingers, both of which cast long shadows over Pfitzner's massive score, and whose themes of a sacred art, and more specifically a sacred German art, Palestrina also explores exhaustively. And that, for British audiences in the 1990s at least, is where the problems start, despite the delicious irony of the Royal Opera choosing to mark its anniversary with a work that is fundamentally a hymn to German nationalism.

Great art, everyone says, should transcend the cultural context in which it was written. But with a work like Palestrina it's impossible not only to divorce the music and the subject matter from when it was composed, but also separate it from what happened in Germany in the years after the first performance, and from the composer's role in those events. Born in 1869, Pfitzner was a contemporary of Richard Strauss, and always saw himself as a continuation of the great German romantic tradition. He was an instinctive musical conservative, and became a fierce opponent of modernism in general and of Schoenberg in particular.

There's no doubt Pfitzner identified with the 16th century composer, the last in the line of great polyphonists who, by producing a mass supposedly dictated to him by angels, reasserted the importance of music in the Roman Catholic church at a time when it was threatened by Florentine "modernism" on the one hand and by a return to plainchant on the other. Palestrina was the saviour of a tradition, just as Pfitzner himself set out to be.

The first act of the opera ends with the completion of the mass, and the third with Palestrina alone in his study, finally at peace in the knowledge that his art has saved the day. But the central act switches focus from the private to the public, bringing to sarcastic life the Council of Trent and its endless haggling over the details of the Roman liturgy, in which Palestrina's own musical struggles play a peripheral part. But what Pfitzner is saying in the opera is that good composers should reinforce and maintain the tradition rather than undermine it.

In Pfitzner's book that musical tradition meant German nationalism, and when it's remembered that his anti-modernist polemics were to be used by the Nazis in their propaganda against "degenerate" artists, then listening to Palestrina becomes a very troubling experience. The music itself is a queasy mixture of the exalted and the commonplace.

Lehnhoff's production is at its best in marshalling and characterising the assembled clerics in the Council scene, with wonderful cameos from Thomas Allen, Sergei Lelferkus, Robert Tear, Kim Begley, Nicolai Gedda and René Pape — starry casting indeed. In the end, honourable though Lehnhoff's deliberately non-interventionist approach may have been in theory, letting a work like this speak for itself, without a mediating voice, is asking for trouble.

The imperfect princess

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

THE entertaining thing about monarchy is that you never know what you are going to get out of the bran tub. Princess Margaret, as Nicky Haslam said in Secret Lives (Channel 4), is a one-off.

She was, for instance, genuinely beautiful. Seen through the leaf-patterned glass of her car, dazzling with tears during the Peter Townsend affair, she looked luminous. Secret Lives said she chose royalty above love but her uncle, who did choose love above royalty, was still swinging in the wind.

Secret Lives did not tell us any secrets. It was made against Princess Margaret's wishes and under difficulties. There were plenty of biographers, one bemused old farmer and friends of friends. Haslam, who once shared a flat with her friend Roddy Llewellyn, said: "She's never badly rude, she's *really* rude. One feels it's almost a game to her, because she loves getting it right, being rude. She does it so perfectly. It's like a game, set and match."

It would have been instructive to hear an example of this viper strike. There is, of course, her letter to Fergie: "Not once have you hung your head in embarrassment."

Her friends seem as long-suffering as they are loyal. She is a demanding guest. One hostess felt she had to rewire an entire bedroom so the princess could plug in her curlers. I refer her to a hero of mine, the third Earl of Leicester who, when his wife asked if she should invite the king and queen to lunch, said sternly, "No Alice, don't encourage them!"

It might have been worse. There was a Wittelsbach princess who lived with a goat. Now there was a tricky house guest. Secret Lives struck lucky in Mustique. Billy Mitchell is a crony of the princess there. Or was. She is a convivial, uncorseted soul with a partiality for Scandinavian sailors ("Much younger than myself, of course"). She told how the princess would ask her to locate some lobsters, then accept them graciously as a gift. "She didn't get drunk — as such — but she was quite well oiled. I think she needed it. She was very quick-witted. She could defend herself but she still had in some mysterious way a lack of self-confidence. I think she was probably impossible to live with. You might be sexually intimate with her but somehow I believe she was never able to relax and just become a woman."

Billy will not, you feel, have to find any more free lobsters.

Some life after death

Nicholas Fraser

Santa Evita
by Tomas Eloy Martinez
Doubleday 320pp £15.99

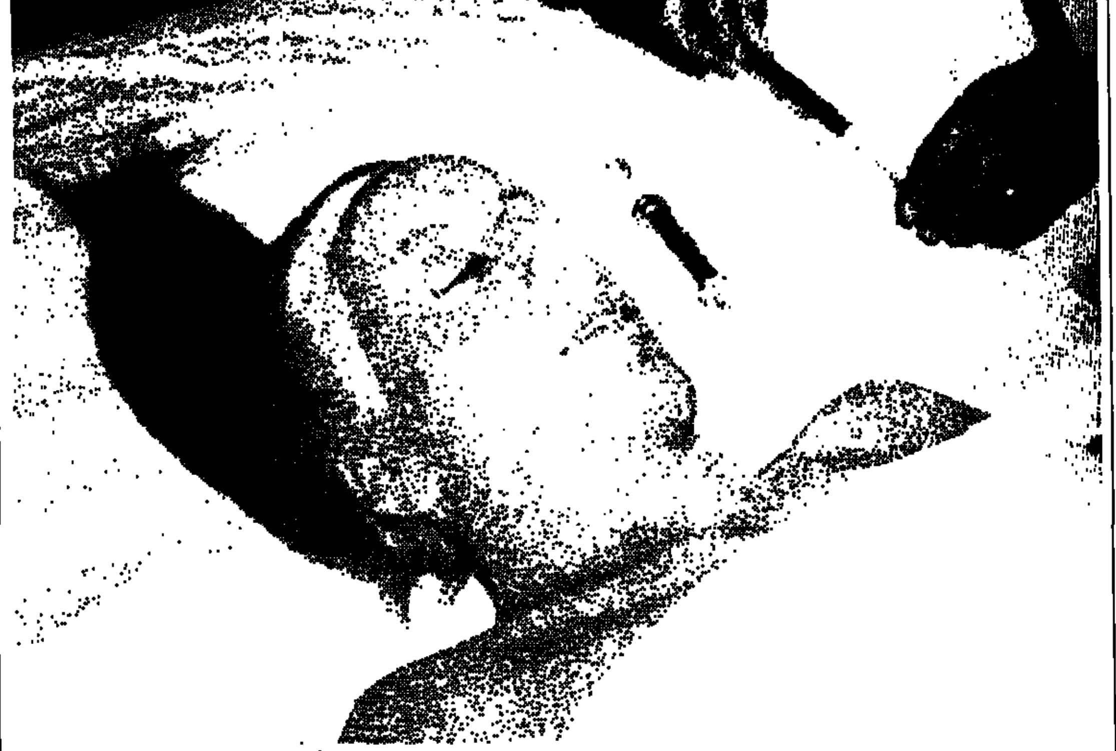
WHEN I first became interested in Eva Perón, during the seventies, it was still dangerous to make inquiries about her life. It was also difficult to find out much about her — investigation of her sex life was taboo, although people alleged to have slept with her were still to be found in Buenos Aires. But the most perplexing aspect of her life had to do with what happened after her death, and how it was that she became a cult object. I was confronted with an excess of information, not all of it plausible. Were latex copies of Evita's embalmed body made? Was it true that a mysterious series of accidents had occurred to those responsible for hiding Evita? Did it matter?

Rapidly, I despaired of finding out the truth about Evita. The lies told about her had their own life. They were as important as her real story (or more so) — and I wondered whether it wouldn't be better to render her memory as fiction. But I also found myself possessed by Evita — in my dreams I represented her as a dark butterfly sweeping over an empty landscape. Reading Tomas Eloy Martinez's Santa Evita, I wasn't surprised to find the same dream. He, too, wanted to tell the truth about Evita; instead he wrote a wholly absorbing work of fiction.

Flaunting its magical realist pedigree, Santa Evita assembles all the banal half-truths and lies told about its heroine around the indisputable, awesome fact of her death, aged 33. "The sources on which this novel is based are not altogether reliable," Martinez explains, with a wink in the direction of Garcia Marquez, Vargas Llosa et al. "But only in the sense this is true of language and reality as well." This is both true, and not so true. The fictions Evita spun around her own life — she hid her illegitimacy and destroyed evidence of her actress past — were only novelistic in the sense that fictions, like political propaganda, are composed of untruths. Evita and Perón organised their own soap in which they became ideal beings sacrificing themselves on behalf of the people. But this fiction became grounded in reality when Evita fell ill at the height of her power.

Nauseating as they seemed to her vindictive and snobbish enemies, the emotions surrounding Evita were real enough — they were evident in the shrines elevated to her memory, and the 40,000 requests for her canonisation received by the Vatican. In her last words Evita left instructions to her followers they should not leave a stone standing if Perón were threatened. Evita's status as revolutionary myth was thus assured, but in real life it was linked to the memory of death and the anticipation of failure.

Her embalmed body was the work of Dr Pedro Ara, a bald, diminutive Spaniard who was Franco's cultural attaché when he wasn't practising what he called "the art of death". At the trade union headquarters, where the embalmer busied himself with his interminable inspections, it was kept suspended in a glass showcase.



Saint or sinner? Evita's life after death remains the great Argentine story of our time

The army officers who overthrew Perón in 1955 faced a ticklish problem — what to do with the body. It could neither be incinerated nor exhibited, so they decided that it should be hidden. Unfortunately, the task was entrusted to a demented, alcoholic, mythomaniac colonel called Eugenio Moori Joenig. He failed to bury the body. Instead, he kept it for his own enjoyment, hidden behind the screen of a movie theatre. Later, it was smuggled out of Argentina, and pseudonymously buried in Milan, where it remained for almost 20 years.

Journalists pursued the body, while guerrillas knocked off banks in Evita's memory. Her myth lived, as the graffiti proclaimed, somewhere "between the lights of what was not and the darkness of what might have been". Futile and anti-climactic, a vulgarly necrophile Ealing comedy scripted by Borges, Evita's life after death remains the great Argentine story of our time. Martinez tells it with winning style and makes Evita into a character inspiring many conflicting emotions. But the book is less convincing when dealing with the hokiest versions of the Evita myth. It is just possible that three pre-Barbie latex dolls were made by an Italian sculptor. *However, Evita wasn't briefly* exhibited in a sex emporium in Hamburg, nor was she ever shipped to the moon. These tabloid rehashes don't merit endorsement in the guise of literature — the problem for a novelist is that Evita's story doesn't need embellishment, the truth is bizarre enough.

"I will come again, and I will be millions," says the inscription on Evita's tomb. This is something she might have said, and didn't, but it happens to be true. Nowadays, Evita belongs to all of us, but as showbiz — old, reamplified seventies tunes and retro forties frocks. Luckily, Santa Evita is there to remind us that the real Eva Perón was a terrifying, *unforgiving figure about whom* one can never have the last word. I dreamed about Evita when I finished the novel. The dark butterfly was still there. — *The Observer*

Reading between the edited lines

Natasha Walter

The Diary of a Young Girl:
The Definitive Edition
by Anne Frank
Edited by Otto Frank and Mirjam Pressler; trans. by Susan Massotty
Viking 339pp £16

ANNE FRANK'S diary is one of the greatest books of the century, partly for what it is, and partly for its place in history. The events that lie after the last page — when a car pulled up at the Franks' hiding place in Amsterdam, disgorging an SS sergeant, and Anne Frank and her family were taken off to their deaths — often threaten to overwhelm the diary itself.

Anne Frank has become a monument to the Holocaust, the archetypal victim. But you only have to open the diary to remember that this is not just a historical document. It is the diary of a young girl, and a young girl who was already an astounding writer.

How did Anne Frank know how to write so well, so early? Her diary hums with the need to create, not just to record, the smells and sounds of her hiding place, the looks and speech of the people in it, and the colours of her emotions.

As she brings herself and her circumstances into such buzzing, engaged life on the page, she triumphs over her history. We return to her again and again, unable to believe that this hymn to life was written on the way to Belsen.

This edition, edited by Mirjam Pressler, adds about a third more material to the standard edition that Otto Frank, Anne's father, who survived the camps, brought out in 1947. For those of us who have only read the standard edition before, it's a real excitement to read all these meaty additions.

Her entry for March 24 1944, dropped from her father's version, appears here. "I often go up to Peter's room after dinner nowadays to breathe in the fresh evening air," it begins. By then, Anne Frank had been confined to her tiny annexe with seven other people for a year and eight months; the desire for air and freedom speaks itself without self-pity, but with a sort of understated poetry. The desperate embarrassment of trying to conduct one's first love affair in this tiny annexe, watched by her own parents and Peter van Daan's parents, is also referred to in this entry with a charming, naive dignity. "I can't tell you how often the conversation at meals has been about an Annexe wedding, should the war last another five years. Have my parents forgotten that they were young once?" And then, with the easy change of focus that Anne Frank had mastered, she switches from these cool observations to a look at the intimacy between Peter and herself. She worries about how Peter might find out about women's bodies, and resolves to explore how one might explain a woman's genitals "without models". So follows the most precise and elegant description of her own body, suffused with the fascination and joy that young women can take in their own bodies.

This edition is being marketed as though such sections are now being



Anne Frank: triumph over history

seen for the first time. But there is nothing here that was not published in English in the 1989 edition of the diary, the "Critical Edition", also published by Viking.

Perhaps there can be no definitive edition of Anne Frank's diary, given the way that she was forced to leave it. She had kept it from her 13th birthday on June 12, 1942, but had started rewriting earlier sections of it before she was captured in August 1944. So there are two parallel and very different versions of much of the diary, and the Critical Edition lays them out side by side for comparison. But this edition goes the way of Otto Frank's version, and chooses to make the two into one seamless whole, relying mainly on her rewritten diary but editing out parts of it and stitching in bits from the earlier one. In other words, rather than being a definitive edition, this is one more version, fuller than Otto Frank's, but still full of gaps and ambiguities.

If what appears in the Critical Edition is correct there are oddities in the way Mirjam Pressler has cut and pasted Anne Frank's two originals together to make this new version. Why do these two resonant sentences not appear, as they do in the Critical Edition's entry for October 14 1942: "Tonight I dreamed about PS [Peter Schiff] again and he was the same as always, I just wish he would come and hide with us here too. Perhaps the poor boy is already dead in Poland"?

Why does Pressler ignore those intriguing moments when the material aspect of writing a diary are highlighted — as when Anne Frank makes a mistake, and then scribbles, "That must be from all the excitement, my heart is beating like a sledgehammer"? There are dozens of similar omissions. Some could be dismissed as trivial. But they add up. If we respect Anne Frank as a writer, and not just as a monument, we don't want liberties taken with her prose. We want the real thing, as full and immediate as possible.

Above all, by making a seamless, easy-to-read whole out of the two different versions of the diary, Pressler elides the development of Anne Frank as a writer. In the Critical Edition, you can see how the uncontrolled, importunate earlier entries gradually metamorphose into maturity. Here, that is heavily obscured by the desire to close up the gaps and varnish over the style.

Despite these drawbacks, if you have never read the diary, or haven't read it for years, this is the edition to buy. The Critical Edition is too unwieldy to be read straight through, and that immediate disadvantage outweighs its other advantages. And whatever edition you read, Anne Frank's clear, resonant voice rises above her editors. That is her triumph. She is an unsentimental writer who still breaks our hearts. "Who knows, perhaps the day will come when I'm left alone more than I'd like."

If you would like a copy of The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition at the special price of £12, contact Books@The Guardian Weekly

Crime

Lucretia Stewart

Give us a Kiss, by Daniel Woodrell (No Exit Press £10hbk, £6.99pbk)

THE MOST original of this week's books by miles, Give Us A Kiss, bills itself as a "country noir", a genre hitherto unknown to me — as indeed is the writer. As the blurb puts it, "Doyle Redmond is on the drift from a failed marriage and a floundering life" — immediately we feel at home. The setting is "the red and rocky soil of the Ozarks where Redmonds have been farming and fighting since the Civil War". Doyle is a writer who has never hit the big time: sent to bring his big brother Smoke to face the music — and the law — he finds him shacked up in Deliverance country with Big Annie (whose drop dead gorgeous "hillbillyette" daughter Niagra tells him, "They love to rut in the mornin', under the shade trees where the grass is all dewy and slick and stuff"). Smitten with Niagra, Doyle is co-opted into a money-making scheme involving the theft of a huge dope crop. Then the fists start to fly.

The Bone Collector, by Jeffrey Deaver (Hodder & Stoughton, £16.99)

SOPHISTICATED chiller whose influences include The Silence Of The Lambs and Ironside. The title reveals the murderer's particular obsession; the detective is a quadriplegic forensic specialist, Lincoln Rhyme, whose Clarice Starling is a beautiful beat cop called Amelia Sachs. Uncomfortable with her beauty, Amelia feels at ease with Lincoln who can barely move a muscle. Compulsive reading even if the violence at times seems gratuitous.

M Is for Malice, by Sue Grafton (Macmillan, £15.99)

SOMEBODY said to me recently, "What's she going to do when she runs out of letters?" Possibly retire. I love Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone novels. You know exactly what to expect and you are never disappointed. Here, Kinsey is hired to find the n'er-do-well son of a millionaire to try to talk him out of taking his share of the loot. He's a reformed character, born again, but even so things get pretty nasty. Still, Kinsey is enjoying a sex life again, and that can't be bad.

Out of Reach, by Elizabeth McGregor (Headline, £16.99)

COMPETENT mystery about a woman whose child was stolen 10 years previously and who suddenly starts receiving letters telling her that he's alive. There are two plots, skilfully interwoven. But where, oh, where is the pace and humour that even the silliest American crime-writer seems to summon up effortlessly?

Ending In Tears, by Penny Kline (Macmillan, £16.99)

DEPRESSING going-nowhere tale by Bristol-based psychotherapist about a kidnap attempt which turns out to be only the tip of a more complicated iceberg. Psychologist Anna McColl to the rescue. You have to keep flicking back through the pages trying to remember who the characters are. I don't blame Anna's lover Owen for going to Australia. Not one bit.

Iain Sinclair . . . in touch with secret forces in London's Smithfield district. For Sinclair magic has become politics PHOTO: DAVID SILLITOE

Magus of the city

James Wood

Lights Out For The Territory:
Nine Excursions in The Secret History of London
by Iain Sinclair
Granta 400pp £12.99

ANYONE who cares about English prose cares about Iain Sinclair, a demented magus of the sentence. He is a bitter, slangy, rich precisionist who is flooded with impressions. It is London that floods him, and this book of described walks in London streets is a fabulous saturation.

One does not have to believe Sinclair all the time. So purely is he a stylist that he returns prose to a state of decadence: that is to say, one can find Sinclair's leftish politics babyish, his taste for pulp writing tiresome, his occultism untrue, and forgive all of this because the prose, gorgeously amoral, is stronger than the world it inhabits. It consumes the world it inhabits.

Sinclair's book is divided into nine encounters, loosely structured around a series of grainy scavengings undertaken on foot by the author and the photographer, Marc Atkins. Admirers of Downriver, Sinclair's archaeological London novel, will find certain places and themes recurring — the ambiguous centrality of the Thames, the history-tormented streets of Hackney, St Paul's, exiled poets and pulp writers, stubborn booksellers. Behind all this lies Sinclair's theories about force fields, ley lines, history as a kind of electrical sediment.

The prose is brutally gouged by what he sees around him. It forces his writing into the colloquial and comic, and gives it its salt. Reflecting on the growth of private security services in Hackney, Sinclair writes: "The philosophy is homoeopathic, treating like with like. Take a gander down the flank of the decommissioned hospital on the far side of Kingsland Road: vans. And they're all plastered with promises in heavy duty protection — alarm systems, grilles, trip-wires, locks, chains. Everything the upwardly mobile Ecstasy broker could require."

There are so many squeezed details, so many fat sentences in this large book that one can only toss a few grains at the reader. Walking In The Square Mile, Sinclair sees the police pull over some victims: "A quorum of Afro-Caribbeans in over-ambitious German motors are discriminated to the side of the road." John Major is "an understudy for Gilbert and George". In the book's best chapter, Sinclair and Atkins visit Jeffrey Archer's penthouse overlooking the river opposite Westminster. Sinclair logs the astonishing view, the streaming light, the "khaki Thames", the "birds everywhere, glittering avian objects that link with the gilded acorns and pineapples and obelisk flames of Westminster and Lambeth . . ."

And then this moment of lyricism hardens into a sardonic crust: "Sitting at the end window, sundowner in hand, a tragic poet with a taste for sentimental elegies would have been uniquely placed to watch the Marchioness go down." There is a cockiness, a clip to this; and an invigorating rage, which has also to do with his furious disestablishment. Like all good satirists, he loves a soft target.

Sinclair is known for a kind of anarchist-leftism: the kind that prefers Hackney's squalor to Docklands' *perfection. But he is a conservative,* really. This is both appealing and unappealing. It gives him a useful interest in power and class; he wants to know where people went to school. He hears accents, watches class-slyness. The writing recalls Conrad's in The Secret Agent — both writers feel metaphysically oppressed by power.

But, less appealingly, one fears his conservatism seeks to freeze London. This is the danger of his strange belief in the occult. It is difficult to summarise Sinclair's doctrine of "psychogeography" (much of it from Blake), partly because Sinclair seems not always to take it seriously. The idea is that London is divided into energy fields, and that certain areas of the city have magical potencies which flow from their historicity.

It is this belief that sanctions Sinclair's prejudices in this book — prejudices that then become a politics. For instance, Sinclair hates the police roadblocks in the City because they are an affront to the "energy field" of that area. Thus, for Sinclair magic has become politics. This conservatism has its purest exponent in Sinclair's keenest student, Peter Ackroyd, for whom the past is like the food on someone else's plate, always more interesting than one's own. The result is a deeply conservative theory of culture in which a magical essence is handed down from age to age.

There is such a danger in Sinclair's writing. Fortunately, he is transfixed by the modern, a sublime archaeologist of the present, and his dig has produced one of the most remarkable books ever written on London.

A copy of this book is available at a special discount price of £10.99 from Books@Guardian Weekly

Toffee of the universe

Ian Sansom

Penguin Modern Poets 10
Douglas Oliver, Denise Riley, Iain Sinclair
Penguin 152pp £5.99

IN LIGHTS *Out For The Territory, Iain Sinclair describes poetry, rather sweetly, as "the toffee of the universe", and this latest Modern Poets anthology from Penguin certainly gives the reader plenty to chew on.*

There is, of course, poetry by Sinclair himself, which is much to be welcomed, since individual collections of his work are difficult to come by.

While Sinclair's novels are extraordinary displays of erudition and imagination which often degenerate over time in the reader's mind into so much stuff and nonsense, poems are short enough and generous enough to allow the reader to bask in their afterglow. It is a poetry of brilliant, lapidary thoughts and well-honed observations.

Compared with Sinclair, Douglas Oliver's work might seem like easy reading. There is a welcoming tone of voice, a friendly syntax, and an easily locatable speaking subject, which is much more like the kind of poetry that usually gets taught in schools and colleges.

But one shouldn't be fooled by Oliver's open-handed manner. He inveigles you in — "A long, easy line of introduction, as if I'm a poet prosing alongside you, / a stranger, half-turning in his enthusiasms" — in order to slap you down, startling the reader with his vision of a bankrupt, broken-down society, a Britain "dying of its own accord". He is one of the very best political poets writing in English.

Denise Riley's work is not so much shocking as simply intoxicating. Her language is fluent, stuttering, confident, self-interrogating, and, above all, memorable: "It's true that anyone can fall / in love with anyone at all. / Later, they can't. Ouf, ouf". Her comparative neglect is of such long standing that one despairs of her ever finding the audience she deserves.

Sinclair and his like are published by small presses, and you can't usually find their books in the shops. None of them gets so much as a mention in a standard reference work like The Oxford Companion To Twentieth-Century Poetry. If you can only usually find Hughes and Heaney under "Poetry" in your local W H Smith's, and you always wondered what else had been happening in poetry over the past 20 years, buy this book.

Comrade Vodka

Isobel Montgomery

Moscow Stations
by Venedikt Yerofeev
trans Stephen Mulrine
Faber 130pp £14.99

WHEN the editors of the journal Sobriety And Culture published Moscow Stations in 1988, they thought they were contributing a cautionary tale on the evils of vodka to Mikhail Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign. In 1993 when Tom *Courtenay recreated Venedikt Yero*feev's drink-inspired monologue for the British stage, audiences thought they had found a contemporary Chekhov, a new Uncle Vanya.

Yerofeev wasn't around to correct them, having died from cancer of the throat in 1990. But in whatever drinkers' paradise he now inhabits, he probably mixed himself a Tear of a Komsomolka cocktail and wondered how his Venya could ever have been so misunderstood.

Venya, on his way to Petushki where the jasmine flowers and his "flaxen-haired she-devil" and baby son wait for him, is the Brezhnev-era offspring of Russian literature's Everyman, a little man who kicks against the pricks through sublime drunkenness. The story of his journey is a picaresque travelogue set in what Russians call the time of stagnation. Venya, its hero, is a Muscovite who does not know where the Kremlin is but knows more important things, like how to mix a Dog's Giblets cocktail (Zhiguli beer 100g; Sadko the Wealthy Guest shampoo 30g; anti-dandruff solution 70g; superglue 12g; brake fluid 35g; insecticide 20g). He spends his life in station buffets, suburban trains and doorways. This is a country where vodka, not communism, is the ruling ideology.

As Venya travels the 125km to Petushki he narrates his descent into an alcoholic underworld, lubricated by a fantastic cocktail of literary allusion, Soviet sloganeering, philosophy and myth. This hellish world, peopled by ticket inspectors who collect payment in vodka, workers too pissed to do anything but drink, and drunks who plot the stages of inebriation on graphs like they were production targets in a five-year plan, is not so very far from Soviet reality. Much of Venya's autobiography, his job laying cables, his girlfriend and child in Petushki and career alcoholism, is shared with his creator. Written in 1969 or 1970, the manuscript circulated in samizdat and was published abroad before becoming a cult classic in the final years of the Soviet Union. Venya's offspring can be found in contemporary literature doing dead-end jobs and hanging around in the same marginal landscape of suburban high-rises and vodka shops.

A Moscow Stations cocktail — a dash of Gogol, a splash of Dostoevsky mixed with the Bible and Dante — should be enjoyed slowly: at 130 pages it counts as a literary short, but it has a memorable kick.

Football Premiership: Newcastle United 4 Leicester City 3

Shearer hits a 13-minute hat-trick

Michael Walker

NEWCASTLE were 3-1 down with 13 minutes to go and not only appeared dead and buried in this match but also in the race for the championship. Then Alan Shearer scored a hat-trick.

It was the Keegan era revisited in terms of the atmosphere and Newcastle's display. Afterwards their manager Kenny Dalglish said: "I now have a better understanding of why Kevin went a bit grey."

Dalglish was a relieved man indeed because, with Manchester United and Liverpool winning last Saturday, and Arsenal and Wimbledon each picking up a point, the defeat that seemed probable as late as the 76th minute would have left Newcastle eight points off the lead. As they have yet to visit any of their four rivals, the coffin lid was closing fast. But then Shearer stuck up a boot and Newcastle found a revival from within.

For Leicester it was a case of sensationally bad luck and they were understandably aggrieved, especially about the winner. Robert Lee looked suspiciously offside when he received a pass from Lee Clark on the byline before crossing for Shearer to sweep in.

Leicester deserved sympathy and praise in equal measure, and yet in truth they were overwhelmed in terms of possession and shots on goal.

It began in the second minute when Robbie Elliott converted a Gillespie cross that Asprilla and Ferdinand had bites at. Asprilla started in place of Beardsley, whose form has slumped since Dalglish's arrival. The Colombian, whose introduction in mid-week had coincided with four late Newcastle goals against Everton, troubled Leicester.

For 25 minutes Newcastle's football was better than for some weeks but though Ferdinand and Shearer (twice) had good chances to extend the lead, Leicester somehow managed to go in at half-time only one down.

Had Heskey been more alert when lobbing Hislop, City might even have been level, and 10 minutes after the interval they were. Matt Elliott, O'Neill's record signing last month, sent a long, looping header beyond Hislop.

The cross had come from Parker, who in turn had been given the ball by Lennon, and these two then took control of the game. From Lennon's long throw Elliott and Heskey helped the ball on to Claridge, who rammed it underneath Hislop.

With Newcastle committed to attack and their defence disintegrating fast, Heskey beat Batty in a 68th minute charge to a pass from Claridge and drilled the ball through Hislop.

Ginola was then sent on for Gillespie and the Frenchman dribbled his way to the heart of Leicester's defence, where he went down under a challenge from Taylor. With Keller directing the wall and defenders either side of him on the goalline, Shearer sensed uncertainty and struck quickly. His free-kick nearly broke the roof of the net.

The noise was now growing with each Newcastle surge, and when with seven minutes remaining Ferdinand found Shearer, the Gallowgate End breathed expectantly. They were not disappointed, Shearer whacking the equaliser into the far corner. Then came the injury-time winner.

Football results and league tables

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP Aston Villa 1, Sunderland 0; Blackburn 2, West Ham 1; Derby 0, Liverpool 1; Everton 2, Nottingham Forest 0; Leeds 0, Arsenal 0; Manchester Utd 2, Southampton 1; Newcastle 4, Leicester 3; Sheffield Wed 0, Coventry 0; Tottenham 1, Chelsea 2; Wimbledon 1, Middlesbrough 1.

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE First Division Bolton 2, Birmingham 1; Bradford 1, Huddersfield 1; Grimsby 2, Charlton 0; Norwich 1, Barnsley 1; Oxford 1, Manchester City 4; Port Vale 2, West Brom 2; Portsmouth 1, Oldham 0; QPR 0, Crystal Palace 1; Southend 0, Ipswich 0; Swindon 2, Sheffield Utd 1; Tranmere 2, Reading 2; Wolves 2, Stoke 0.

Second Division Bournemouth 0, Blackpool 0; Bristol Rovers 2, Shrewsbury 0; Crewe 1, Burnley 1; Millwall 0, Bristol City 2; Notts City 1, Luton 2; Peterborough 0, Walsall 1; Plymouth 0, Wycombe 0; Preston 0, Chesterfield 1; Stockport 1, Brentford 2; Watford 2, Rotherham 0; Wrexham 1, Gillingham 1; York 0, Bury 2.

Third Division Carlisle 2, Northampton 1; Darlington 5, Lincoln 2; Doncaster 1, Scunthorpe 1; Hartlepool 1, Scarborough 0; Hereford 3, Wigan 1; Hull 1, Chester 0; Leyton Orient 1, Exeter 1, Mansfield 1, Brighton 1; Rochdale 1, Barnet 1.

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE Premier Division Aberdeen 2, Kilmarnock 1; Dundee Utd 1, Celtic 0, Dunfermline 3, Motherwell 1; Hibernian 1, Raith 1; Rangers 0, Hearts 0.

First Division Clydebank 1, Airdrie 1; Falkirk 1, Dundee 1; Partick 3, East Fife 1; St Johnston 1, Greenock Morton 0; St Mirren 1, Stirling 3.

Second Division Ayr 1, Livingston 0; Berwick 2, Stranraer 0, Clyde 3, Stenhousemuir 0; Hamilton 4, Dumbarton 0; Queen of the South 2, Brechin 1.

Third Division Alloa 0, Forfar 3; Arbroath 0, Queen's Park 0, Cowdenbeath 2, East Stirling 0, Montrose 0, Inverness Cal 2; Ross County 3, Albion 1.

FA Carling Premiership

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man Utd	25	14	8	3	50	28	50
Liverpool	25	14	7	4	42	20	49
Arsenal	25	13	8	4	44	23	47
Newcastle	25	13	6	6	50	30	45
Chelsea	24	11	8	5	38	33	41
Wimbledon	23	11	6	6	36	28	39
Aston Villa	25	11	6	8	32	26	39
Sheff Wed	24	8	11	5	26	27	35
Everton	25	8	7	10	24	38	31
Tottenham	24	9	4	11	28	33	31
Leeds	25	8	6	11	21	27	30
Sunderland	25	7	8	10	23	32	29
Blackburn	24	6	9	9	26	24	27
Leicester	24	7	6	11	25	35	27
Coventry	25	6	9	10	23	33	27
Derby	24	5	10	9	22	30	25
Nottm Forest	25	5	8	12	23	40	23
West Ham	24	5	7	12	20	32	22
Southampton	23	5	5	13	32	41	20
Middlesbrough*	24	5	7	12	30	44	19

* Three points deducted

Nationwide League First Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bolton	31	18	10	3	65	39	64
Wolves	30	15	7	8	42	28	52
Barnsley	29	14	9	6	50	35	51
Sheff Utd	30	14	8	8	50	33	50
Norwich	30	13	7	10	50	33	46
Crystal Palace	29	11	10	8	53	32	43
Tranmere	30	12	7	11	42	37	43
Port Vale	31	10	13	8	38	35	43
Stoke	29	12	7	10	35	40	43
QPR	30	11	9	10	43	42	42
Portsmouth	31	12	6	13	35	37	42
Ipswich	30	10	11	9	41	39	41
Oxford Utd	30	11	7	12	41	38	40
Huddersfield	31	10	10	11	37	42	40
Swindon	30	11	5	14	42	40	38
Birmingham	27	9	10	8	30	27	37
West Brom	30	7	14	9	46	52	35
Charlton	29	10	5	14	30	40	35
Reading	30	8	10	12	37	46	34
Man City	29	9	5	15	33	43	32
Bradford	31	7	10	14	29	48	31
Southend	30	6	11	13	28	52	29
Oldham	28	6	10	12	30	35	28
Grimsby	29	6	9	14	35	53	27

Second Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brentford	29	15	10	4	47	28	55
Luton	27	15	6	6	46	27	51
Bristol City	29	13	8	8	47	30	47
Crewe	28	15	2	11	41	31	47
Burnley	30	13	6	11	44	34	45
Bury	26	12	9	5	39	25	45
Chesterfield	27	13	6	8	25	20	45
Stockport	27	12	8	7	38	30	44
Millwall	29	12	8	9	37	38	44
Watford	27	10	14	3	28	20	44
Wrexham	26	10	11	5	35	31	41
Walsall	27	11	6	10	32	30	39
Shrewsbury	30	9	9	12	39	47	36
Blackpool	28	8	11	9	32	30	35
Bournemouth	30	9	8	13	28	34	35
Bristol Rovers	29	8	10	11	28	31	34
Preston	29	9	6	14	29	35	33
Gillingham	29	8	8	13	31	39	32
Plymouth	29	7	11	11	31	42	32
York	28	8	6	14	28	44	30
Peterborough	28	6	11	11	39	46	29
Wycombe	28	7	6	15	26	41	27
Notts County	28	5	9	14	21	35	24
Rotherham	28	4	9	15	24	44	21

Third Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fulham	30	18	5	7	53	28	59
Carlisle	28	16	8	4	43	26	56
Wigan	28	16	5	7	50	34	53
Swansea	31	15	6	10	40	32	51
Cambridge Utd	30	15	5	10	41	39	50
Northampton	30	13	7	10	49	32	46
Colchester	30	10	15	5	44	32	45
Cardiff	29	13	4	12	35	35	43
Lincoln	30	11	8	11	41	47	41
Scarborough	29	10	11	8	37	35	41
Torquay	29	12	4	13	31	33	40
Hull	30	9	13	8	28	32	40
Mansfield	29	9	12	8	31	28	39
Chester	28	10	9	9	28	31	39
Scunthorpe	28	11	5	12	43	43	38
Hartlepool	30	10	6	14	34	40	36
Barnet	29	8	12	9	27	27	36
Leyton Orient	30	9	9	12	27	29	36
Rochdale	27	8	10	9	31	33	34
Exeter	30	8	7	15	29	43	31
Darlington	29	8	6	15	41	53	30
Doncaster	30	8	5	17	33	48	29
Hereford	30	8	5	17	31	45	29
Brighton*	30	5	7	18	29	51	20

* Two points deducted

Bells Scottish League Premier Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	25	19	4	2	63	21	61
Celtic	25	17	3	5	61	25	54
Dundee Utd	25	12	6	7	34	31	42
Hearts	25	9	7	9	35	35	34
Aberdeen	25	9	7	9	38	39	34
Dunfermline	25	9	5	11	38	48	32
Hibernian	25	6	6	13	26	43	24
Kilmarnock	25	7	3	15	29	45	24
Motherwell	25	6	6	13	26	45	24
Raith	25	5	5	15	21	44	20

First Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St Johnstone	24	17	4	3	54	14	55
Dundee	25	11	8	6	36	24	41
Partick	25	10	10	5	41	27	40
Airdrie	24	9	11	4	36	24	38
St Mirren	23	11	5	7	30	30	38
Falkirk	24	9	7	8	23	22	34
Gr Morton	24	8	6	10	28	27	30
Stirling Albion	25	6	7	12	33	47	25
Clydebank	23	5	6	13	19	30	20
East Fife	25	1	5	19	16	71	8

Second Division

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ayr	22	15	3	4	37	21	48
Livingston	22	13	6	3	35	18	45
Hamilton	21	12	4	5	43	19	40
Clyde	22	9	8	5	28	21	35
Stenhousemuir	23	8	7	8	31	22	31
Queen of South	23	7	6	10	32	42	26
Brechin	22	6	8	8	25	31	26
Stranraer	22	6	5	11	21	32	23
Dumbarton	23	6	6	12	20	43	21
Berwick	23	2	6	15	23	52	12

Third Division

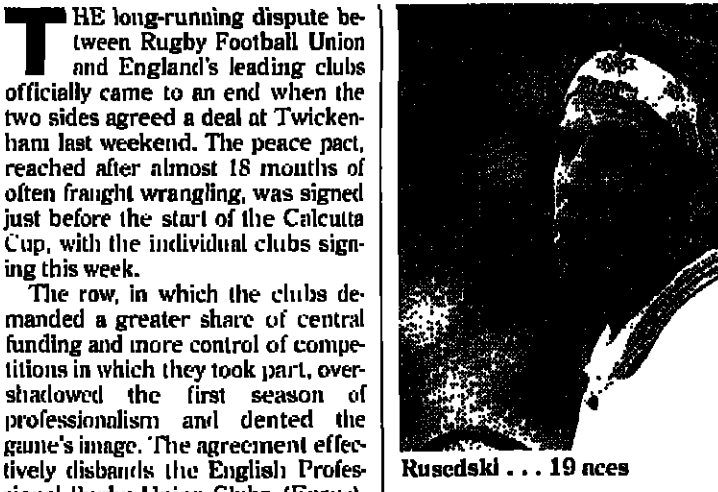
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inverness	21	13	5	3	39	22	44
Forfar	21	11	5	5	44	28	38
Ross County	22	11	3	7	37	29	36
Alloa	20	9	5	6	31	28	32
Montrose	22	9	3	10	33	38	30
Cowdenbeath	22	8	4	10	27	27	28
Albion	21	7	7	7	28	28	28
Queen's Park	23	5	8	10	29	37	23
Arbroath	21	4	7	10	17	31	19
East Stirling	21	3	6	12	18	34	15

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Rugby peace pact

THE long-running dispute between Rugby Football Union and England's leading clubs officially came to an end when the two sides agreed a deal at Twickenham last weekend. The peace pact, reached after almost 18 months of often fraught wrangling, was signed just before the start of the Calcutta Cup, with the individual clubs signing this week.

The row, in which the clubs demanded a greater share of central funding and more control of competitions in which they took part, overshadowed the first season of professionalism and dented the game's image. The agreement effectively disbands the English Professional Rugby Union Clubs (Epruc), which represents the clubs in the top two divisions. It is replaced by a new body, Newco, in which both sides have an equal share and which will administer and market the top club competitions.



Rusedski . . . 19 aces

GREG RUSEDSKI, the British tennis No 2, put up a brave fight before being narrowly defeated by Goran Ivanisevic in the final of the Croatian Indoor Championship at Zagreb on Sunday. In a two-hour thriller, Rusedski fired 19 aces to the hard-hitting Croat's 22. He also showed great composure despite the highly partisan crowd before the local hero went on to win the final set on a tie-break to clinch victory at 6-7, 6-4, 6-7.

SECOND Division Stockport County sprang yet another surprise when they defeated Premiership side Southampton 2-1 in the quarter-final replay of their Coca-Cola Cup match. County's young team, assembled for just over £400,000, can now look forward to banking £1 million from their giant-killing cup act. After going a goal down, they fought back to snatch the winner seven minutes from time. They next take on Middlesbrough's £30 million collection of highly paid under-performing stars. In the other semi, Leicester take on Wimbledon.

SIX members of the Ethiopian football team, who sought political asylum in Italy but later changed their minds and returned home, have been suspended by their country. Ten others are still in Italy, where their cases are being examined.

CRAIG McDERMOTT, Australia's second most successful bowler of all time, has been forced to quit the game due to a chronic knee condition coupled with increased business interests. The 31-year-old Queenslander made his Test debut against West Indies as a 19-year-old and finished with 291 wickets from 71 Tests at an average of 28.63.

Cricket Tour match: New Zealand A v England XI

England flops while Lloyd flips

Paul Weaver in Wanganui

ENGLAND, as had seemed inevitable after their disastrous collapse on the second morning, went down to defeat by New Zealand A by 90 runs here last Sunday to become the first touring side to lose a first-class game in New Zealand, outside Test matches, since the rookies of Sri Lanka in 1983.

A few minutes after the embarrassing formalities had been completed the England coach David Lloyd walked briskly into the press tent at Victoria Park and began to talk such a load of tosh that everyone present was immediately reminded of his mutterings in Zimbabwe before Christmas.

Lloyd is not mad; neither is he stupid. But when things go against him, as they have recently, he is capable of spouting a torrent of hokum.

Among Sunday's blatherings were: "I was very proud and pleased with the way we approached this game, and that we stuck at it . . . We played well, given the circumstances . . . We gave as good a performance as could have been expected . . . This defeat has not been at all damaging, not in the slightest . . . It's been a useful exercise."

While this was going on, experienced cricket writers, hardened hacks from earlier campaigns and who could recall Ted Dexter invoking astrology, looked at one another and shook their heads.

This was the same Lloyd who, in the early, successful stages of the New Zealand tour, stressed the importance of winning every match.

In the past it was unthinkable that an England touring side should lose a warm-up game such as this. Now such mishaps have become commonplace, and this match was particularly disappointing because, with one or two exceptions, England did not even bother to compete.

Afterwards the New Zealand A captain Darrin Murray said: "We were prepared to fight a bit harder. In their situation we would have dug in and fought a bit more. It was surprising."

Lloyd added, pointedly: "We are now going to enjoy our rest after the Test. We have had 10 days' solid cricket; I don't count a day's travelling as a rest day. I'm sure the Bryan Youngs, Blair Pococks, Nathan Astles and Dipak Patels have enjoyed the past five or six days. According to the newspapers they haven't been playing much cricket."

Next summer Australia, after the first Test and a single day's rest, face back-to-back first-class matches against county sides. It will be interesting to hear what, if anything, they have to say about their itinerary.

Scores: England XI 107 and 272
New Zealand A 181 and 288
New Zealand A won by 90 runs

Rugby Union The Five Nations Championship: England 41 Scotland 13

England throw down the gauntlet

Robert Armstrong at Twickenham

ENGLAND's prospects of winning a fourth Grand Slam in seven years gained immediate credibility with a record eighth successive victory over Scotland, which was also their biggest win in the history of the Five Nations Championship. Ireland, having beaten Wales, may not feel daunted by the impending visit of a rampant England side but there is every chance Lansdowne Road will witness another high-scoring contest on February 15.

The 114th Calcutta Cup match was far from typical because it produced five tries, four of them by England, and a great deal of fast-flowing rugby. Fears that the game would deteriorate into a joyless penalty shoot-out were ultimately laid to rest by the England backs, who suddenly fired off a brilliant salvo of three tries in five minutes during the final quarter-hour.

England's performance had its share of gaffes but was nevertheless a vindication of the selection of the coach, Jack Rowell. In his first championship match as captain, Phil de Glanville must have been delighted that his players threatened to score tries from first to last.

By the end the Scots were in tatters, having succumbed to a short sharp tryfest. The rout began in the 68th minute when Johnson sent Gomarsall over from short range; then Carling held off Logan to plunder a popular try in the right corner; and finally de Glanville popped up at the side of a ruck in front of the posts to take a short pass from Gomarsall and race through to the line. Yet the Scots deserve Brownie points for having helped to turn this error-strewn spectacle into one of the most entertaining games on this ground in recent years.

At times it seemed that the bold attacking play of Scotland's fly-half Gregor Townsend and leftwing Kenny Logan was prompting their England counterparts Paul Grayson and Jon Sleightholme to raise the stakes even higher with their own calculated brand of risk-taking.

"I was happy with the overall balance of the side," said de Glanville. "We had power up front and speed among the backs; it was a pleasure to play with them."

Certainly the dynamic quality of support running and ball transfer among England's backs and forwards illustrated the type of training build-up favoured by Rowell, who has been preaching the gospel of interactive rugby since the 1995 World Cup. Richard Hill, the newly capped Saracens flanker, brought a wider range of options to the back row with probably the most authentic open-side display seen in an England shirt since the era of Peter Winterbottom. At last Rowell appears to have found the missing piece in the engine-room jigsaw.

Memories of the recent cramped performance against Argentina, which put a question mark over Rowell's future, receded as England cleared the ball away from the rucks at pace, giving the centres Carling and de Glanville the chance to impose themselves. Grayson, who scored 21 points, may have been a bit short of his best goalkicking form but he amply compensated for three missed penalties with several scintillating breaks which drew praise from Rowell.

"Grayson showed handling skills and running skills that brought others into the game," said Rowell. The down side of England's performance was that they battled for 67 minutes without crossing the Scottish line, having been awarded an early penalty try for persistent infringement by the Scots.

At times England's handling and co-ordination, especially in broken play, were not up to league standard, and on top of that their cover defence was patchy.

Scotland's decision to switch Townsend from centre to No 10 paid off handsomely in improved cohesion and urgency among the backs, with Logan a persistent thorn in England's right flank and Eriksson, the scorer of an excellent 25th minute try, a powerful midfield presence. But much of Scotland's good work was undone when their defence lost all shape and concentration under sustained pressure from the England pack in the second half and within minutes the game drifted away from them.

The Scots were out of luck too when the New Zealand referee Paddy O'Brien failed to see Rob Wainwright's hand ground the ball in the left corner after he was driven over early on — "a 50-50 decision that went against us", the Scotland captain said glumly. "After an hour or so England got good second-phase possession, realised they could score tries and the holes began to appear."

Lift off . . . Andy Gomarsall lights the fuse that sparked England's victory against Scotland at Twickenham in the 114th Calcutta Cup match PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

Wales 25 Ireland 26

Wales lose their way

Ian Malin in Cardiff

AND SO the scarlet runners who had such a vivid purple patch in Edinburgh were once more halted by the men in green. Wales's dreams of a Triple Crown vanished on a raw, grey afternoon, but the future is far from bleak.

Wales's management had been realistic about their championship prospects after their win at Murrayfield, and the coach Kevin Bowring is well aware of the thin line between success and failure at international level.

As Bowring acknowledged afterwards, it was the Wales pack who were to blame for a lack of control that ensured that Ireland's 14-year-old unbeaten run in Cardiff would continue.

Wales have preached and are practising a running game, which is epitomised by the selection of the adventurous Arwel Thomas in the hallowed No 10 shirt.

They pierced the gloom to score three tries to add to the four at Murrayfield, and the Welsh public appreciate this bold approach.

But as Bowring said: "You have to maintain possession when you play this mobile type of game."

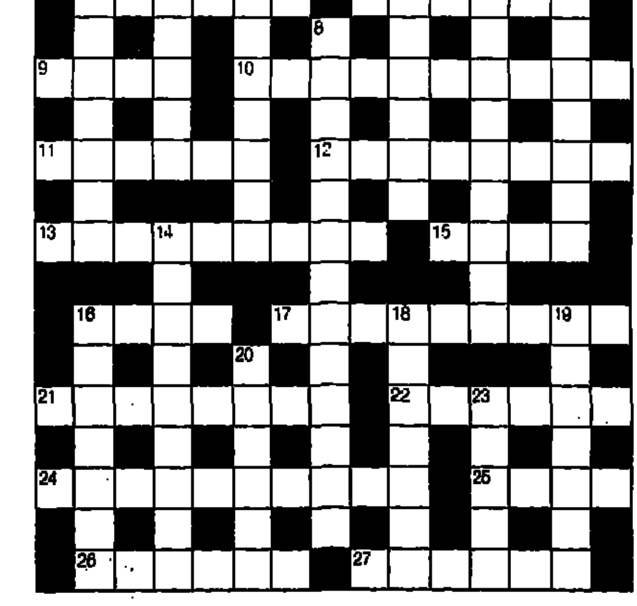
Wales also ran into some brick-wall tackling and an Irish pack that rediscovered their old fire. They were also helped by an over-indulgent referee, the Australian Wayne Erickson, who gave a typically liberal, southern hemisphere interpretation of the offside laws.

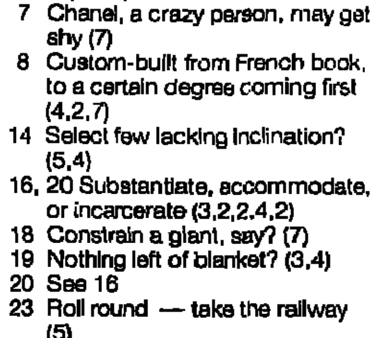
Ireland's infringing at rucks and mauls allowed their outstanding back row of David Corkery, Eric Miller and Denis McBride to run rampant. They were aided by a loose display by their opposite numbers. Pat Whelan, Ireland's dour team manager, gave credit to their new English coach Brian Ashton for his work during the past month. But in truth the former All Black Mike Brewer probably deserves more plaudits for his work with the Ireland pack, in which Jeremy Davidson enhanced his Lions prospects and Ross Nesdale had a promising debut at hooker.

And all this after Ieuan Evans had scored the first of his two tries after only 32 seconds before an Irish hand had touched the ball. The wing, who has now scored 33 tries for his country, and Wales's scrum-half Robert Howley can starting packing their cases for South Africa now.

Wales's captain Jonathan Humphreys said the rest of his team were in good heart for the next fixture, at the Parc des Princes on February 15.

Cryptic crossword by Araucaria





Across

1 Greeting from Wooster who has eaten his headgear (4,2)
4 Larger than life sort of verse? (6)
9 A grand spot for a mausoleum (4)
10 (Order changed) Company! Left face! Fire! (4,6)
11 Backward lot in a hostile spirit (6)
12 What did you say about seed? Any day in January (8)
13 Bushy-tailed lunatic twigs (9)
15 Duplicate drops in the kitchen (4)
16 Story of book for bed (4)
17 Tails give new image to Tracey, possibly (9)
21 Laughter at needlework? (8)
22 Eat or talk turkey? (6)
24 Tip: Borstal may be what he needs (6,4)
25 Tell to surrender (4)
26 Having no word processor, do it again in its entirety, perhaps (2-4)
27 One of the cast who knows his lines? (6)

Down

1 One who drives West's a dead duck (7)
2 Warning of a wing man's opening (5)
3 Trite saying for metal worker (4-3)
5 The object of batting is to cover the ball (6)
6 How one drives, of course, not 8 (3,3,3)
7 Chanel, a crazy person, may get shy (7)
8 Custom-built from French book, to a certain degree coming first (4,2,7)
14 Select few lacking inclination? (5,4)
16, 20 Substantiate, accommodate, or incarcerate (3,2,2,4,2)
18 Constrain a giant, say? (7)
19 Nothing left of blanket? (3,4)
20 See 16
23 Roll round — take the railway (5)

Last week's solution

